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Mechanisms and Implications of Identity Hybridization in Online Advertorials

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English

by

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College of the Ozarks
Bachelor of Arts in English, 2012

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This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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Abstract

This study analyzes the ways corporate-sponsored image advertorials published in online platforms construct identities for their sponsor. By analyzing 6 advertorials from *The Guardian Online* as well as a user comment thread on the same website using critical linguistic analysis and conversation analysis, respectively, this study suggests that the identities constructed in corporate-sponsored advertorials are a hybridized form, claiming both the goals of a corporation and the social legitimacy of a professional activist. To construct these hybrid identities, the advertorials in this sampling used specific linguistic strategies to demonstrate agency with regard to a specific social issue while seeming to legitimize their own activism through recasting the issue itself as well as the roles of other actors, including other activists, other companies, the victims of harmful practices, or consumers. This study also suggests that the interaction of an advertorial's host platform's identity (in this case *The Guardian Online*) with that of the advertorial's proffered hybrid identity is itself notably complex, since contradictions between these two identities provided opportunities for critical response to the advertorial's message and the subsequent disqualification by readers of the corporate identities proffered in the advertorial.

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Dedications

To all the members of my family, all eight and two-halves of them—thank you for providing moral support and for smiling at my incomprehensible murmurings.

To Dr. Domínguez Barajas—thank you for spending so much time going over drafts of this project and for thoughtfully answering all my many questions about methodology.

And to all my students—who, like me, were at first unable to distinguish between sponsored content and a news report.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Objectives of this Project	1
Tools and Methodologies	8
Chapter 2: Historical Context of the Advertorial and Implications of the Shift Online	11
Introduction	11
The Advertorial and the Shift Online	13
Conclusion	19
Chapter 3: Critical Linguistic Analysis of 6 Advertorials from <i>The Guardian Online</i>	22
Introduction	22
Data and Methodology	25
A Paired Example: AS1 and AS2	27
Text of AS1	29
Indefinite Nouns, Verb Tense, and Passive Constructions used to Frame, Address and Invoke the Issue of Supply Chain Management and Slavery in AS1	31
Indefinite Nouns as Substitutions for Slaves' Plight in AS1	33
Manipulation of Temporality, and Passive Constructions in AS1	35
Linguistic Strategies used to Frame, Address or Invoke other Companies, the Consumer, the Press, and the Slavers	39
Introduction to AS2	45
Excerpts from AS2	46
Linguistic Strategies used to Frame, Address or Invoke the Issue of Slavery and Supply Chain Management in AS2	48
Linguistic Strategies used to Frame, Address or Invoke the Actors in AS2	49
Discussion of AS1 and AS2	51
The Role of Temporality in the Construction of an Activist Persona: An Advertorial Campaign featuring Patagonia	53
Excerpts from AS3, AS4, AS5 and AS6	55
AS3	55
AS4	57
AS5	59

AS6	60
Linguistic Strategies used to Frame Social Issues in AS3, AS4, AS5, and AS6	61
Invocation of Other Actors in AS3, AS4, AS5 and AS6	65
Discussion of AS3, AS4, AS5, and AS6.....	68
Conclusion.....	70
Chapter 4: Analysis of User Responses to Advertorials in <i>The Guardian UK's</i> Sustainable Business Section	73
Introduction and Methodology.....	73
Comment Thread 1 (CT1) From <i>The Guardian Online</i>	77
Analysis: The Role of <i>The Guardian's</i> Identity in an Economy of Knowledge.....	81
Discussion	85
Epilogue	89
Directions for Future Research:	91
Works Cited	93
Appendix A - AS1	97
Appendix B - AS2.....	99
Appendix C – Sponsorship Banner in AS2.....	102
Appendix D – AS3.....	103
Appendix E – AS4	106
Appendix F – AS5	109
Appendix G – AS6.....	110
Appendix H – Screenshot of CT1	113

Chapter 1: Introduction

Objectives of this Project

Publishing third-party, non-journalistic content in news publications and magazines has been a common journalistic practice since early in the 20th century (Brown *et al.* 26). In spite of the ongoing debate over ethics and the challenges it poses to journalistic integrity, the practice has become ubiquitous and continues to expand (Wodjynski and Golan 1403)—indeed, the very survival of media outlets is dependent on their ability to draw advertisers (Bogart 117), and even self-professed leftist newspapers like *The Guardian* now have dedicated sections of their website devoted solely to content sponsored by various business interests, sections that work as thematic catch-alls for “sponsored content.” This study analyzes a specific type of sponsored content, the corporate-sponsored image advertorial, which is a “paid message by an organized interest to create a favorable climate of opinion” (Brown *et al.* 23) published, typically, alongside journalistic (or similar) content in an attempt to mimic the host format. In the production of advertorials, organizational tensions between marketing and journalism are especially strong; and the lines between the two are constantly being renegotiated within news organizations, as the newspaper’s credibility stands to suffer if sponsored content is seen to be figured too prominently (Eckman and Lindlof 76). As Brown *et al.* point out, large corporations, while they sponsor the most advertorials, are not their only sponsors; there are increasing numbers of special-interest organizations that buy space in newspapers to disseminate their own message (24); corporate-sponsored image advertorials, however, present to discourse analysts an especially interesting case regarding the implications of identity construction. To all appearances, what Brown *et al.* call a “favorable environment” (24) for corporate sponsors (the same environment that the image advertorial seeks to create through print) is no longer one in

which companies only need the assent of government agencies—there must, because of the speed of online activism and an increasing global ecological awareness (Fotea and Fotea 109), be the semblance of public consent or “social license to operate” (Alhuwalia 1) where there is yet competition in a market; it is no longer simply “big polluters” or multinationals who must demonstrate social consciousness, but so must every large—or highly-visible—company or social cause. The “favorable environment” that the corporate-sponsored image advertorial seeks to establish or reinforce is, for the purposes of this study, this very “social license to operate.” Put simply, the advertorial functions as *a text attempting to garner a public license for its subject-sponsor so that it may continue operating as it sees fit.*

This same public license, however, cannot be established simply by expressing goodwill in a few advertorials. Varied demonstrations of *corporate activism* are the centerpieces of the advertorials in my sampling—they feature their corporate subjects much as traditional journalism would, presenting the issue, actors, time, and location of a specific event with bearing on a social issue, but in such a way that legitimizes the subject-sponsor’s role as a social activist, especially regarding its own practices and spheres of influence, most notably in supply chains. McDonnell, in a study of corporate activism, concludes that overt demonstrations of activism (focusing on the corporate boycott) are a “last resort” for companies facing a hostile public, but can also lead to reductions in the severity of challenges by activists; and the leaders of such large and harried corporations are well aware of the effectiveness of corporate activism as a public-relations tactic (66).

In this study, I focus on the corporate-sponsored advertorial—articles that mimic journalism in tone but are actually sponsored by an outside party (Brown *et al.* 24)—and the ways in which they construct identities for their sponsor (or subject, as I count various freelance-

written pieces as advertorials), and also on some implications of the ways these identities are constructed. These advertorials, I argue, *discursively construct a hybridized identity for their subject-sponsor* by combining the traditional corporate aims with the public-minded goals of the social activist—this they do by co-opting the discourse practices of activism itself. This hybridization, though, is by no means politically-neutral. In my sample texts, the process of combining corporate and activist identities also involved strategic obviation of more traditional activists, especially members of the press and citizen/consumer activists, and also a careful reinvention of the social issue itself—the ultimate result, in each case, was that the advertorials not only made the subject-sponsor appear to be a legitimate activist, but also legitimized that identity by seeming to remove the possibility of state or citizen involvement, either through litigation or consumer activism. As such, the advertorials fashioned their own versions of their respective stories (whether of environmental crisis or supply-chain abuse) while strategically adjusting the social issue itself (e.g., victims of practices, severity, culpability of sponsor-subject), the role of the various actors (e.g., regulatory bodies, consumers), and when those actors entered the situation (e.g., who was first at the scene, who “blew the whistle”). Essentially, the advertorials in my sampling, by hybridizing corporate and social-activist identities, also made claims to activism that would preempt the activities of other activists—by hybridizing a corporate identity with a social one, the advertorial is also attempting to reconstruct the typified power relations of corporate power vs. social activist, thus redefining public conceptions of activism itself and who is able to engage in it. The sponsors of advertorials, by laying claim to social goods—the right to engage in activism—previously out of bounds, have taken a first step towards existing in the minds of consumers not as a faceless profit-making machine, but a force for good moving toward an idealized future.

The shift to online delivery of most types of print (and especially of news consumption in the U.S.), as discussed in chapter 2, presents an increase of user interaction along with a possibility of loss of the control of the message. The very strategies identified in the advertorials in my sampling play a role in limiting the possibility of unwanted user interaction—the strategies used in the construction of a hybrid identity, to all indications, attempt to foster what Maguire *et al.* call “identification-based trust” as a form of normative control; essentially, it is an internalization of the sponsor’s needs and objectives accompanied by a sense of goodwill (289). The authors also point out that constructed “identities and their social meanings” cannot be neutral, that an “actor’s sense of their own identity” can be and is used as an “informal method of control” (290). While this may seem drastic, most previous scholarship on advertorials, while hesitating to go into detail about their social implications, have assumed that advertorials are the farthest thing from mere texts—they are, as Brown *et al.* write, meant to change the social landscape into something more conducive to the sponsor’s goals (24). Indeed, McDonnell writes

...a firm's perceived *social responsibility* may affect the likelihood that it will be targeted by activist challenges (King and McDonnell 2015), and firms that have an established reputation for being prosocial may also be more likely to join with activist groups in sponsoring what they perceive to be prosocial initiatives. (61) (emphasis in the original)

This proposed end is itself an attempt to change a specific order of discourse, specifically the one surrounding social activism, into a legitimization of “self-policing.”

These strategies of normative control are also, I argue, a response the increasing power of the reader to interact with the message of the advertorial itself, especially through user comments on the website and sharing on social media or email. With the proliferation of social media, a message—specifically as part of a PR campaign—is much more difficult for a subject-sponsor to manage directly; in response, the advertorial offers its subject-sponsor as a social activist while also removing the possibility of any other type of activism from the picture.

Within discourse studies and communications journals, the studies of advertorials that I've seen tend to use them in case studies to make broader theoretical claims (Eckman and Lindlof; Livesay); the ethics of disclosure of labeling is also a popular subject (Hellemens *et al.*). Lay readers, however, are not considered participants in the message; they are described in the static role of consumers rather than in the role of interacting identities which are constructed and revised through discursive means; individuals, in these studies, tend to exist in socio-historical vacuums, and the data they offer is in their individual response at that moment of exposure to the advertisement. The discussion, at that point, is generally restricted to discussions of the consumer's attitude towards the sponsor, and is taken no further. The reader is not depicted as "made of words" and existing through words, but as a wallet with a mind. This is important for this reason: changes in the platforms through which advertorials are distributed have afforded readers far more power in that 1) readers are able to comment on certain advertorials, which, I argue, is itself an interpretive artifact, and 2) that the reader is able to repurpose the advertorial through various mechanisms of "sharing" across digital media, including Facebook, Twitter, Pintrest, and email.

While emphases on intertextuality have been especially productive in past discussions of advertorials (e.g., Kong), I have chosen instead to focus on the ways individual texts construct identities for their sponsor (or subject) and the implications of these same identities for the discursive practices of activists. In fact, the study of identity construction in advertorials seems to me more appropriate approach in that the *reception of texts*, not only the production, can be dealt with in detail—ultimately, it is not only the discourse practices that are being renegotiated in these advertorials, but an entire set of values and assumptions that are historically, and continue to be, at war in the western press. To shun the connection between the texts themselves and the

ideological conflicts that produce them is to impoverish any analysis of the former. Viewing the advertorial as occurring in a vacuum ignores the discursive construction of social life, and, accordingly, fails to contribute to an understanding of advertorials as socially-significant acts (Fairclough 46). From the perspective of discourse studies, a field that assumes that all discourse entails the social negotiation of meaning, readers do not read, understand, or respond to advertorials solely as individuals, nor do advertorials address themselves to a mass of individuals—instead, every advertorial enters a climate that has been created, sustained, and is constantly renegotiated discursively.

I have adopted discourse studies as my approach, and thus assume that identities are not static entities but are rather constantly being negotiated discursively—they are “fluid and ambiguous,” created, experienced, and reshaped through language (Phillips and Hardy 40). As such, I have chosen identity construction as a lens not only to see how advertorials present a friendlier-seeming identity for their subject/sponsor, but how they use these single texts in their construction of a new, hybrid profile which combines the typical corporate goal of profit at any cost with the socially-conscious attention to ecological and human effects of their own practices. Snejder and Moulder note that “in discourse, identities are made relevant by constructing or ascribing membership of a broad range of possible categories that make particular inferences available and are associated with particular kinds of activities” (622). The acceptance of an advertorial’s message, then, is entirely dependent, within a discursive view of identity, on whether or not the reader accepts the sponsor’s legitimacy as a social activist; thus, the *advertorial enacts specific linguistic strategies, attitudes, and social languages* (Gee 45) *which have heretofore come to represent those practices.*

In these texts, social activism itself—who can participate in it, what sorts of issues are worth addressing, what sort of victims deserve advocates—is being discursively adjusted to fit with the aims of the sponsor, which are to create a climate more conducive to the sponsor's goals by reducing the threat of activist challenge (McDonnell 61) and garner a social license to operate (Alhuwalia 1).

My research questions are as follows:

1. How are the driving forces behind advertising manifested in online advertorials and in responses to those advertorials, and how have those forces changed the genre?
2. What are the discursive themes and linguistic mechanisms by which hybridized corporate-social identities are constructed in online advertorials?
3. How does the attributed identity of the host publication interact with the hybridized identity of a corporate-sponsored image advertorial?

Tools and Methodologies

In this document, I make use of two separate, complementary studies aimed at uncovering, firstly, the ways in which online advertorials construct identities through linguistic strategies (chapter 3) and, secondly, uncovering the basis for a reader's rejection of that identity (chapter 4). In chapter 3, I make use of text-based critical linguistic analysis (CLA) as outlined in Phillips and Hardy's *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction*, and in chapter 4, I use elements of Conversation analysis (CA), first proposed by sociologist Harvey Sacks in 1970. While focusing on distinctly separate data sets—discourse being social and text being linguistic—both approaches produce highly complementary results for a study of identity construction. CLA, by its usefulness in determining linguistic themes and strategies, explicates the identity as it is presented in the text, and CA, in turn, is able to analyze the unique group logic that provides significance (ten Have 120) to those identities, and in which a rejection of that identity is based. Basically, these two approaches focus in turn on the *production* and *reception* of the corporate-sponsored advertorial.

I have arranged my two separate studies in such a way that I begin with the texts, and move outward to the readership: in the first study, I conduct an in-depth linguistic analysis of 6 advertorials from *The Guardian UK*'s Sustainable Business section of their website, looking at specific linguistic strategies accompanying identity construction of a hybridized corporate-social identity; in the second, I conduct conversation analysis of the user-comments accompanying one of these same articles, attempting to uncover patterns that clear the way to underlying systems of logic and significance (ten Have 120) contributing to their readers' responses. Basically, I attempt to uncover the ways this hybrid identity is made, and then move on to the potential obstacles this constructed identity may face as it attempts to build identity-based trust (IBT)

between its subject-sponsor and the reader by using activism as a vehicle for the internalization of the sponsor's needs and objectives (Maguire *et al.* 289).

While there is a precedent for my conducting linguistic analysis of texts in the media (Jalbert; Astroff and Nyberg), I acknowledge that many practitioners of conversation analysis will likely balk at my establishing a research question beforehand (as opposed to beginning with “unmotivated looking”) as well as my using this methodology to analyze an instance of “online talk” as opposed to a transcript of an oral conversation. I recognize that there are inherent difficulties in applying CA to such a constrained medium, but I also maintain that the methodology first proposed by Sacks in 1974 is yet useful in computer-mediated-communication. As Gonzalez-Lloret points out, the very notion of “turn-taking” is suspended by the medium itself; in many instances of computer-mediated-communication (CMC), posts are published in the order the server receives them—there is thus no mechanism which delegates a speaker (312). She asserts, however, that CA yet retains specific usefulness in analysis of CMC:

...it may well be that SCMC does not conform to the turn-taking sequence as proposed by Sacks *et al.* (1974) because it is not a purely oral conversation and its sequential principles are tightly related to the medium. Therefore, rather than imposing existing structures on the new medium, we should examine the ways in which participants achieve different sequence types in the new medium, much in the same way that telephone conversations were first explored using a CA approach (Schegloff, 1979, 2002a, 2002b). (313)

Likewise, Giles *et al.* make the case that, while CA is a productive approach to CMC, it should not be appropriated wholesale. Rather, a researcher should take special care to implement an iterative analytic procedure on “naturally-occurring online data,” also considering the ways in which CMC differs from spoken language and whether the researcher should use CA transcription guidelines (50).

The samples themselves are, according to Brown *et al.*'s taxonomy of advertorials, made up of eight image advertorials (meant to enhance public opinion of the sponsor) and one advocacy advertorial (meant to win support on "issues of public values or policy") (24-5). Of those nine advertorials, five are "supported" by a sponsor, of which three are supported directly by large corporations (GM, Mondelēz Int.), and one by NGO Humanity United. The remaining three (AS4, AS5, AS6), all of which feature clothing manufacturer Patagonia, are written by separate freelance writers; the articles also appear in the same section of the *Guardian*'s Sustainable Business section, but which do not exhibit the common "sponsored-by" banner. I am treating them as advertorials because their individual linguistic strategies (e.g., devices of temporality as a way to establish "pure agency") and cumulative discursive themes (e.g., the subject-sponsor's activism is legitimized largely by precluding other possible solutions to a social issue) are very similar to those of AS1, AS2, and AS3, which did have a traditional "paid-by" banner; thus, I consider that AS4, AS5, and AS6 all construct a hybridized corporate-social activist identity, just as these others do.

Chapter 2: Historical Context of the Advertorial and Implications of the Shift Online

Introduction

In this chapter, my goal is to establish a context by which to talk about advertorials as a genre, here formulated as a typified response to a repeated rhetorical situation (Miller 151), in order to discuss the dynamics of the texts' production and reception. The goals of advertorials seem to have remained largely unchanged since before the shift online; whereas the changes in technology (e.g., news websites, social media "sharing" of articles,) seem to have increased the available number of platforms for advertorials, the frequency of their publication (Hoelzel qtd. in Wodjdynski 1403), and the ability of readers to affect the message itself through "likes" and public comments. The increase in reader involvement, I suggest, has lent itself to an increase in exertion of normative forms of control, including the removal or restriction of comment sections or linguistic strategies that attempt to preempt negative reader responses (see chapter 3). The practice of publishing advertorials is first of all a way for business interests to address the public, but not in the same way that advertising does—the advertorial may be seen as "meta-advertising," seeking, in effect, not purchase intent, but to proffer goodwill and ameliorate negative sentiment when its subject-sponsor is faced with contention, appealing directly to the public by publishing specialized content in the mass media.

Scholarly discussion of the advertorial, rather than exploring the potential of new mediums to change the genre, tends to be restricted to three main topics of discussion: (1) organizational conflict between marketing and journalism, either within newspaper publishers or between newspapers and marketing firms/sponsors (Eckman and Lindloff; Cameron and Curtin); (2) the inability or unwillingness of newspapers to clearly distinguish between paid content and journalism (Kirschner as cited in Golan; Singer as cited in Golan); and (3) the advertorial's

potential impact on public opinion (Cooper and Nownes). The ways that reader response has been discussed so far have relied mainly on surveys (e.g., Cooper and Nownes; Cameron and Curtin) with little room given to the implications of formatting, reader involvement, or changes in technology. For instance, in a 2004 study published in *American Politics Research*, Cooper and Nownes claim that, while advertorials tend not to positively influence the reader's view of the sponsor (560), they do increase the salience—thus setting an overall agenda by which other texts will be viewed or produced—of the issue addressed in the advertorial. The authors also found that those readers who trust the news publication more than others also were more likely to respond favorably to an advertorial's message which was published there (563). It bears repeating that these claims were made largely independently of discussions of technology, since the authors restricted their analysis to traditional print advertorials.

While there has been adept and wide-ranging scholarship addressing the production and reception of advertorials, I suggest that *any new addition to this conversation must involve a way to discuss the interactional quality of new mediums (computer-mediated communication)*, specifically the implications—for public opinion and for the writers of advertorials—of a reader's ability to change the message through commenting or, more importantly, sharing an advertorial on social media.

The Advertorial and the Shift Online

Corporate interests constitute the main publishers of advertorials. Brown *et al.* remark, with regard to their survey of 2,805 advertorials appearing in *The New York Times*, that even as various “cause groups” (labor unions, foreign governments, and individuals) have come to be represented in their own advertorials, business interests continued to dominate ad space in the publication (32). Brown *et al.* concluded that “position-taking” and “agenda-setting” advertorials were the most popular, constituting over 40% of all advertorials (36), of which the overwhelming majority represented the economic interests of large companies.

All in all, the advertorial is a platform by which almost any interest group or entity able to pay—which is itself a hegemonic practice (Cooper and Nowns 564)—is able to grab the public ear and possibly offer its own agenda, view, or complaint, and has done so for nearly all of the 20th Century. Brown *et al.* remark that the practice was around as early as 1908, when AT&T began a media campaign to promote a monopolistic business model to the public and to government officials, which prompted other telecommunications companies to use the same means to promote their own similar agendas; and during the great depression, business interests published advertorials defending capitalism and free enterprise, and special interest groups later published advertorials attacking the ongoing war in Vietnam; the practice of using advertorials as lobbying, however, began in the 1970s as business interests began reacting against “what they perceived as a hostile environment of public opinion, overbearing government regulation, an anti-business press, and emerging antagonistic consumer and public interest organizations” (28). McDonnell, writing in 2016 about the negative effects activism may have on corporate goals, reflects this very same impetus—the activist is painted not merely as an irritant, but as an enemy:

Contention (from activists) threatens to harm its targets in multiple ways. It can diminish corporate profits by disrupting the target's strategic routines and altering consumer

choices (Seidman 2007, Friedman 1985, Luders 2006). It can threaten a firm's market performance by increasing perceptions of financial and environmental risk (King and Soule 2007, Vasi and King 2012). It can disrupt a firm's ability to access and influence critical nonmarket stakeholders like politicians and regulatory agents (Hiatt and Park 2013, McDonnell and Werner 2015). And it can tarnish a firm's public image by disseminating vilifying claims in the media (King 2008, McDonnell and King 2013) (54).

This excerpt contains the principal and continued purpose of the advertorial, especially the institutional advertisement: that the public should be leveraged against such activists as would challenge the subject-sponsor's bottom line, reputation, stock price, or access to lawmakers. The reaction that Brown *et al.* describe among business interests characterizes the advertorials contained in my sampling, especially given the strategies employed to remove activism—other than the subject-sponsor's own—from the picture.

While the exigence of corporate-sponsored advertorials has remained largely unchanged, the constraints the genre faces—meaning “factors in the (rhetorical) situation's context that may affect the achievement of rhetorical objectives (Grant-Davie 272)—have continued to shape their production. With the advent of social media and online news platforms, the most notable change in the genre is certainly the increasing frequency of publication. As Bogart points out in his book *Commercial Culture*, the very survival of news organization is no longer dependent on content or subscription rates, but the willingness of advertisers to associate themselves with that publication (115). Not surprisingly, according to Hoelzel (cited in Wodjdynski 1403), spending on native advertising is estimated to more than quadruple by 2018 to over 21 billion dollars. Ever since the bulk of news consumption has gone online (Gottfried and Shearer 2), the goals of the advertorial seem not to have changed, but there are several more recent developments in the medium that, I argue, have lasting implications not only for the genre, but for the possibilities of readers to respond—and thus, for the ways in which advertorials may be said to constitute a social act. These changes, I propose, are a reaction to changing constraints of the rhetorical situation, as

named by Grant-Davie (272), in the medium itself and in the sorts of interactions the reader may have with the text, mainly with regard to the two following concerns: (1) the constant adjustment of host publications/platforms and loss of context necessary for interpretation (especially the stance of the host publication, as discussed in chapter 4), and (2) the ability of readers to interact more directly with the text through commenting or sharing the article on social media, even going so far as to hijack the message of the advertorial.

The first change the advertorial has undergone because of the shift to online communication is this: *the advertorial is now able to exist secondarily or even entirely apart from the medium they are traditionally hosted in*—instead of appearing in newspapers and magazines, advertorials have emerged in websites such as Upworthy.com, a site devoted to uplifting or inspirational stories. Upworthy.com is emblematic of the diverse sites amenable to advertorials because they grant space for “partner stories” sponsored by a third party. (As seen in chapter 4, the identity of the host publication or website is itself a key factor in reader response.) In the case of Facebook’s “newsfeed” function, however, articles are taken from multiple news sites or news publications based on predictions of the user’s tastes (Usher-Layser 18). As Gottfried and Shearer report, up to 67% of U.S. adults use Facebook, and of those users, 44% read news using that same platform (4). This removal of the context provided by the news publication or magazine means that the reader is overwhelmingly likely to miss the distinction between journalism and sponsored content—the advertorial’s own credibility is thus bolstered by its presentation through the news publication (Cameron and Curtin 178), but the ability of the reader to discriminate the content’s status as (functionally or directly) an advertorial, which I argue in chapter 4 is largely based on the reader’s sense of the publication’s own attributed identity and conflicts which arise thereof, must address multiple publications simultaneously,

given their relatively equal footing in the newsfeed. Basically, if an advertorial that is first published with a news organization is then featured in a user's newsfeed (or similar function in social media), its separation from its host publication and its proximity to other stories would also diminish the reader's ability to analyze it critically, since the contradictions which provide the basis for such analysis are not as apparent. The advertorial, then, is free to create its own context and present its view without fear of contradiction from previous coverage in the host publication or even the political stance of that host publication.

The second change linked to the shift in medium of delivery is the potential for readers to affect or even hijack the message itself through comments or social media. The response, positive or negative, is virtually instantaneous and nearly impossible to contain. In corporate sponsored advertorials, then, the presentation of a hybridized corporate-activist identity also involves strategic limitations of opposing points of view—those that would take a cynical viewpoint on a company policing its own actions or engaging with social issues—that amount, themselves, to an attempt at restricting reader response. Since the shift online, it is no longer only the credibility of the newspaper that is aiding the advertorial's message (Cameron and Curtin 179) but also the online credibility of the person who “likes,” “retweets,” or “pins” the advertorial. The publisher's control over the message itself is considerably lessened, since these sharing and commenting platforms may affect a reader's perception not only of the issue, but also any actors implicated in the advertorial. On a typical article in the Sustainable Business section of *The Guardian Online*, a user is able to interact with the content either by commenting directly (where available, though with certain advertorials this function is suspended) or by sharing the article using Facebook, Twitter, email, LinkedIn, Pintrest, or Google+, all of which enable the user to introduce the article to secondary audiences. This increased interaction,

though, has led to its own reactions by producers of content, including the restriction or removal of comments sections from websites, or even the arrangement of the content itself—as Stanfil points out, the interface of a website itself may be taken as a form of user control by the creation of norms which then render user behavior predictable (1070).

Another changing constraint is the way a corporate interest tends to present itself to the public in online spaces. Because of increasing ecological awareness (Feaota and Feaota 109) and a propensity of online discussions to revolve around ethical consumption (Papaoikonomou 217), companies seem to have become increasingly likely to take their PR cues from “special purpose corporations,” which are companies which have a stated goal along the lines of an NGO. Within this new paradigm, companies must publicly declare commitment to certain social values, i.e., through establishment of ethical sourcing practices. Most importantly, this overall thrust requires that companies fulfill the roles traditionally associated with NGOs and charities. In fact, McDonnell points out that companies are able to take on the “superior social legitimacy” of NGOs in their own activism:

NGOs' primary mission relates to a social cause, rather than profits, so they are generally perceived as more trustworthy than private corporations. Thus, the participation of NGOs may endow a corporate-sponsored initiative with authenticity, increasing the likelihood that participating firms are perceived to be driven by prosocial motives, rather than economic self interest. (56)

The narrative advanced by the hybridized discourse of corporate-sponsored advertorials is that a company committed to progressive public values, including ecology and economic reform, can also protect its bottom line.

In addition to meeting changing constraints following the shift online, the practice of publishing advertorials is also continuing to change the landscape of online publishing in general. Eckman and Lindlof argue that, as advertorials continue to dominate advertising in

newspapers, the organizational conflict between journalism and marketing has the potential to renegotiate the institutional lines (76). *The Guardian*, for example, uses *degrees of editorial control* as a way to make these organizational lines more apparent to readers; that is, they make the distinction between “paid” content, which is completely under the control of outside parties, and “supported by,” which remains editorially independent (and is written by *Guardian* staff or a freelance writer) but has received funding from the sponsor. In “paid” content, the sponsor, typically a financial institution or insurance provider, has, to all appearances, more control over the story, the graphics, and the layout of the page, but is noticeably separate from journalistic content in form and location (for instance, there are often interactive graphics or videos, and, in many cases, the only mention of a sponsor is in banner ads or at the start or end). In “paid” areas, inspirational narratives (with links to the sponsor’s main page appear or information about their services) appear to be the most common. This demarcation of content-types is likely an attempt by the host to distance its own journalism from sponsored content, thus maintaining its own credibility, which, according to Cameron and Curtin is easily harmed by overexposure to outside content (178).

Conclusion

The changing constraints—namely technological but also social, in so far as public opinion is actively foregrounded—present both obstacles and advantages in the publishing of advertorials. Since the shift online, the advertorial is now able to appear on news feeds so that the distinction between sponsored content and journalism is obfuscated and the message made more effective (Cameron and Curtin 184). This change in technology also enables readers to propagate the advertorial by introducing it to a new group of readers, as well as offering with it commentary in the form of introductions or captions. From the point of view of message dissemination, this is potentially good news for the producers of advertorials, since they are then able to co-opt the efforts of users not only in the reproduction of the message, but in the display of that user's own credibility in their respective online communities. On the other hand, these same mechanisms, while able to enhance the advertorial's visibility, also allow the user to hijack the message and even subvert it, as made evident by users who not only disparage corporate culture but the host publication itself for devoting space to such sponsored content. Essentially, the advantages brought by the change in medium (the shift online) have also brought considerable challenges—the message is exponentially disseminated by enlisting the help of actual readers who impulsively share the content, but enabling readers to take active participation in the dissemination of the message has also rendered the message's reception all the more unpredictable as the message itself passes out of the subject-sponsor's control.

The challenge facing the producers of advertorials, then, is not simply one of crafting a message amenable to the subject-sponsor's aims. The unknown factor and biggest threat to the message's efficacy—the readers themselves—becomes the object of specific and targeted forms of normative control—an attempt to build trust—contained in the article's themselves, both in

the construction of the website (Stanfil 1070) and in the linguistic strategies used in the advertorials themselves (see chapter 3). As Maguire *et al.* argue, “the generation and maintenance of [identity-based trust] is [...] intimately tied up with the construction of myths and the identities that populate them [...]” (305). The advertorial establishes IBT by offering a new set of actors and a new “myth” to give them roles by hybridizing the corporate and the social—essentially, *the advertorial combines in a single actor the motivations and imperatives of both the activist and the businessman*. Through a constructed identity, the corporate subject-sponsor co-opts the role of its historical opponent, garnering, as McDonnell points out, allies among both activists and the public (53). These constructed identities, Maguire *et al.* go on to say, are never politically neutral (290)—within the proffering of a hybridized corporate-activist persona, social activism itself stands to be redefined as the old distinctions (the on-the-ground activist against the executive boardroom) are obviated.

The purpose of the advertorial, as it exists now, is to leverage the public in its favor—and currently, given that the threat posed by citizen or professional activism is stronger than ever because of the internet and social media, the advertorial has developed a notable tendency toward presenting its subject-sponsor as an activist itself. Additionally, the changes in technology, while allowing for ease of dissemination and overall cost-effectiveness, have also co-opted the interactional qualities of the new medium, allowing readers to interact with and change the message itself through commenting directly (unless, as in the case of advertorial 2 below, the comments section is not built into the article) or through sharing the article in various platforms. This ability to commandeer the message of an advertorial adds another consideration to their authors as well as the architects of the websites; namely, that they cannot concern themselves only with the message, but must also attend to the public’s reception and response to

that message. Thus, the production of online advertorials is concerned not only with the content of the article, but on generating a form of normative control for its reader.

Chapter 3: Critical Linguistic Analysis of 6 Advertorials from *The Guardian Online*

Introduction

In this chapter, using critical linguistic analysis, as outlined in Phillips and Hardy's *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction*, I explore the ways single advertorials present hybridized corporate identities. Specifically, I examine strategies for identity construction enacted in six different advertorials. Critical linguistic analysis, according to Phillips and Hardy, is concerned with the close analysis of texts in order "to understand how ... structures of domination in the local or proximate context are implicated in the text" (27). These "structures," however, are not the typical apologia for controversial practices. Instead, these articles attempt to renegotiate the narrative of "activist vs. corporation" that dominates the discourse surrounding business practice within *The Guardian*. The renegotiation of supporting narratives is based in the discursive construction of a corporate identity that not only has an answer for criticism, but that preempts the need for such criticism.

Phillips and Hardy go on to say that investigation of identity construction "investigates the process through which identities are constructed in the interplay of different actors, employing different discursive strategies and resources to establish a definition of identity coherent with particular practices and goals" (31). In my own analysis, I use techniques from close reading and rhetorical analysis on passages that are constitutive of a hybridized corporate identity, by which I mean an identity showing the propensities of an activist and the overall logic of a corporation.

This chapter examines the linguistic strategies in which texts (singly or as part of a larger campaign) situate the subject/sponsor in relation to (1) the social issue being discussed in the

article, and (2) in relation to other actors, be they present or absent, business competitors or regulatory bodies, or public relations firms. Among the linguistic strategies that appeared in these instances, **the manipulation of verb tense** figured prominently. Verb tense manipulation focused largely on communicating the *timing* of events and also the times various actors enter the picture (which is itself an important factor in establishing a hybridized corporate-activist identity because of the need for precedent); this same strategy also allowed for the presentation of the issue itself as less imminent (as in AS1) or more imminent (in AS2) by invoking its highly-complex nature and thus intimating the usefulness of the subject-sponsor's own activism and expertise. Another discursive means used to enact the construction of identity was the practice of "**borrowing**" from the "social languages" (Gee 45) of more traditional forms of activism, thus strategically invoking other discursive strains, such as journalism and the rhetoric of non-government organizations.

While portrayal of the social issue itself tended to establish distance or nearness of that issue to the reader or its weightiness, the portrayal of other companies, legislative bodies, victims of harmful practices, or consumers often involved **syntactic variations and diction** that eliminated actors and actions (this was accomplished especially through the use of passive voice and nominalization) or the construction of a specific timeframe that created a context—a history—for each action. Ultimately, however, the interplay of "issue" and "actors" was so closely related in these samples that to make an observation about one was to do so about the other; I maintain this distinction namely to show how, in these samples, a reshaping of a social issue may amount to legitimization of the actions in the foreground, or even a valorization of one of the actors. In combination, the portrayal of specific actors within a social issue reified a

version of activism that obviated any contradiction between corporate and activist goals, and, in turn, renegotiated the terms surrounding “activism” itself.

The most striking result that came from my analysis of these six sample advertorials was a marked impulse towards *establishing the agency of the subject-sponsor in regard to the issue being presented*. It was this presentation of agency that seemed the most vital to hybridization of a corporate and social identity, since, as McDonnell points out, the corporation involved in activism must not appear to have done so for “purely economic means” (5); however, there were also two distinct facets in the portrayal of agency: (1) the history of the subject-sponsor in relation to that same issue, and also (2) the manner of their response to the current one. In each of the six samples, each of the linguistic strategies under consideration culminated in an attempt to establish a purely egalitarian motivation while still catering to the subject-sponsor’s need to maintain its “bottom line.”

Data and Methodology

These samples of advertorials were taken from *The Guardian Online*. Since the objective of this study is to analyze identity production, I selected these samples because they revealed two relevant features conducive to the study of identity formation in advertorials: (1) a corporate entity was either sponsoring the article or featured in it, and (2) the article showed either clear labeling as “supported” content or as part of a larger advertorial campaign (as with the articles featuring Patagonia). Each article was written by a separate author, having appeared in *The Guardian* from November 24 2015 to February 12 2017, and is here considered separately, as opposed to a corpus approach—the strategies employed in each article are understood within the context of that article, though convergences between articles are also noted. As far as objectives of the advertorials are concerned, all of them meet Brown *et al.*’s characterization of “image advertorials” (see table 3.1) in that they are addressed directly to public opinion (24), with the exception of an advertorial sponsored by Mondelēz Int., which also addresses the public, but in such a way as to implicate its business competitor, Nestlé, in complicity with slavery.

To isolate salient linguistic features in the advertorials and establish areas of convergence, I began by profiling individual paragraphs within articles according to the following two themes: *social issue* addressed, framed, or invoked; and *actors* addressed, invoked, or framed (including allies and opponents). I then selected individual passages for close reading and rhetorical analysis, paying special attention to how various linguistic strategies were contributing to identity construction in the article.

Table 3.1: Profiles of Samples

	AS1	AS2	AS3	AS4	AS5	AS6
Sponsor	Humanity United	Mondelēz Int.	General Motors	(Freelance)	(Freelance)	(Freelance)
Type	Image	Image (attack)	Image/Commercial	Image	Image	Image
Shares	8,017	49, 414	8,300	1694	3,428	210
Comments	N/A	167	17	59	13	2
Issue	Human rights	Human rights	Ecology	Ecology/Public services	Ecology/Public services	Gender Wage gap
See Appendix	A	B	D	E	F	G

(Table 3.1 profiles each of the 6 advertorials in the following terms: its *sponsor*, if available; its *type* or rhetorical goals, which save for AS2 and AS3 are strictly to promote an amenable image of its sponsor-subject; the number of times the advertorial was “shared” through social media; the number of comments left on the website, if available; the social issue featured in the advertorial which provided the backdrop for the subject-sponsor’s activism; and the appendix where the full texts of each advertorial can be found.)

A Paired Example: AS1 and AS2

This paired example represents an uncommon but very intriguing situation in the practice of advertorial publishing—an image advertorial by a multinational corporation followed by a refutation sponsored by that multinational’s competitor. The two sponsors featured in this paired example are Nestlé and Mondelēz, two corporations in competition with one another, and the issue under consideration is supply-chain ethics and modern-day slavery. From the standpoint of analysis, this pair of articles provides an opportunity to compare directly the linguistic strategies each is using, since the subject is more or less the same, but the stance and aims are not. While the first advertorial, sponsored by Humanity United, seeks to distance Nestlé from the issue of slavery, the second, sponsored by Mondelēz itself, attempts to place Nestlé at the scene.

The first of the two articles was sponsored by Humanity United, an NGO based in the U.S., and was featured in a “Modern Day Slavery” section of *The Guardian Online* in November of 2015. Some months before, Nestlé had contracted Verité, a non-profit which conducts “social audits” of supply chains, after allegations of slavery arose—this same organization was featured heavily in the article (in paragraphs V, IX, XI below), lending its “superior social legitimacy” (McDonnell 56) to Nestlé. The advertorial appeared timed, as is often the case (Brown *et al.* 26), as part of a campaign to head off negative press. The article was titled “Nestlé admits to forced labour in its seafood supply chain in Thailand,” and was shared a total of 8017 times.

Three months later, Mondelēz, a direct competitor of Nestlé’s, published its own advertorial, with the title “Nestlé admits slavery in Thailand while fighting child labour lawsuit in Ivory Coast.” In scope and content, it was noticeably similar to the previous—one passage, a quotation from Verité’s then-director Dan Viederman, was identical to a passage used in Humanity United’s article. The emphasis of the second advertorial, however, was not on praising

Nestlé's disclosure of slave labor, but on discrediting the first advertorial, calling into question their competitor's motives in self-disclosure, the efficacy of "self-policing," and even the nature of their business with Verité. Soon after this second advertorial was published online, the banner featuring Mondelēz's name was taken down. By the time this thesis was written, the second advertorial had been "shared" on Facebook 49,414 times, over six times the number of the first.

Of all the samples, the Humanity United advertorial is the only one that did not make use of a comments section. The stance of *The Guardian* up to that point, based on prior coverage of the company, was such that the narratives surrounding the company would have found their way in. In Mondelēz's response, however, the comments section was allowed, and in 167 total comments, only 4 comments appearing to defend Nestlé's self-disclosure, and the word "boycott" appeared 19 times throughout. This suggests that the stance of the paper itself was a definite factor in estimates of reception, and that, given the opportunity, readers would show negative reactions to Nestlé's practices and intentions.

Text of AS1

Subtitle: In a move praised by anti-slavery groups, global food giant reports abuse of migrant labour among its suppliers in Thai seafood industry, after investigation.

- I. Impoverished migrant workers in Thailand are sold or lured by false promises and forced to catch and process fish that ends up in global food giant Nestlé's supply chains.
- II. The unusual disclosure comes from Geneva-based Nestlé itself, which in an act of self-policing announced the conclusions of its year-long internal investigation on Monday. The study found virtually all US and European companies buying seafood from Thailand are exposed to the same risks of abuse in their supply chains.
- III. Nestlé, among the biggest food companies in the world, launched the investigation in December 2014, after reports from news outlets and non-governmental organisations tied brutal and largely unregulated working conditions to their shrimp, prawns and Purina brand pet foods.
- IV. The labourers come from Thailand's much poorer neighbours Myanmar and Cambodia. Brokers illegally charge them fees to get jobs, trapping them into working on fishing vessels and at ports, mills and seafood farms in Thailand to pay back more money than they can ever earn.
- V. "Sometimes, the net is too heavy and workers get pulled into the water and just disappear. When someone dies, he gets thrown into the water," one Burmese worker told the non-profit organisation Verité in a report commissioned by Nestlé. "I have been working on this boat for 10 years. I have no savings. I am barely surviving," said another. "Life is very difficult here."
- VI. Nestlé said it would post the reports online as well as a detailed year-long solution strategy throughout 2016 as part of efforts to protect workers. It has promised to impose new requirements on all potential suppliers and train boat owners and captains about human rights, possibly with a demonstration vessel and rewards for altering their practices. It also plans to bring in outside auditors and assign a high-level Nestlé manager to make sure change is under way.
- VII. "As we've said consistently, forced labour and human rights abuses have no place in our supply chain," Magdi Batato, Nestlé's executive vice-president in charge of operations, said in a written statement. "Nestlé believes that by working with suppliers we can make a positive difference to the sourcing of ingredients."
- VIII. Nestlé is not a major purchaser of seafood in south-east Asia but does some business in Thailand, primarily for its Purina brand Fancy Feast cat food.
- IX. For its study (pdf), Verité interviewed more than 100 people, including about 80 workers from Myanmar and Cambodia, as well as boat owners, shrimp farm owners, site supervisors and representatives of Nestlé's suppliers. It visited fishing ports and fishmeal packing plants, shrimp farms and docked fishing boats, all in Thailand.
- X. Boat captains and managers, along with workers, confirmed violence and danger in the Thai seafood sector, a booming industry that exports \$7bn worth of products a year, although managers said workers sometimes got hurt because they were drunk and fighting. Boat captains rarely checked ages of workers, and Verité found underage workers forced to fish. Workers said they labour without rest, their food and water are

- minimal, outside contact is cut off, and they are given fake identities to hide that they are working illegally.
- XI. Generally, the workers studied by Verité were catching and processing fish into fishmeal fed to shrimp and prawns. But the Amherst, Massachusetts-based group said many of the problems it observed are systemic and not unique to Nestlé; migrant workers throughout Thailand's seafood sector are vulnerable to abuses as they are recruited, hired and employed, said Verité.
 - XII. Monday's disclosure is rare. While multinational companies in industries from garments to electronics say they investigate allegations of abuse in their supply chains, they rarely share negative findings.
 - XIII. "It's unusual and exemplary," said Mark Lagon, president of the non-profit Freedom House, a Washington-based anti-trafficking organisation. "The propensity of the PR and legal departments of companies is not to 'fess up, not to even say they are carefully looking into a problem for fear that they will get hit with lawsuits."
 - XIV. In fact, Nestlé is already being sued. In August, pet food buyers filed a class-action lawsuit alleging Fancy Feast cat food was the product of slave labour associated with Thai Union Frozen Products, a major distributor. It's one of several lawsuits filed in recent months against major US retailers importing seafood from Thailand.
 - XV. Some of the litigation cites the reports from AP, which tracked slave-caught fish to the supply chains of giant food sellers, such as Walmart, Sysco and Kroger, and popular brands of canned pet food, such as Fancy Feast, Meow Mix and Iams. It can turn up as calamari at fine restaurants, as imitation crab in a sushi roll or as packages of frozen snapper relabelled with store brands that land on dinner tables. The US companies have all said they strongly condemn labour abuse and are taking steps to prevent it.
 - XVI. Nestlé promises to publicly report its progress each year.

Indefinite Nouns, Verb Tense, and Passive Constructions used to Frame, Address and Invoke the Issue of Supply Chain Management and Slavery in AS1

In this advertorial's treatment of the issue of slavery and supply-chain management, the most prominent linguistic features, including diction, verb tense, and social languages, defined by Gee as communicative choices used to communicate a certain "who-doing-what" (63), work in unison to construct the labor abuses as the result of distant, indeterminate forces rather than imminent results of corporate practices. But in order to present Nestlé as a both an activist and as a corporation, the advertorial also reconstructs the situation in which the labor abuses were found, when they were found, and the complexity of the issue itself, thus distancing itself from the "scene of the crime" until such a time as they can then be seen to demonstrate agency in their intervention (e.g., contracting representatives from Verité to visit Thailand).

The issues addressed in this paired example, supply chain management and human rights, represent two different discourses in that, traditionally, corporate discourse treats human rights as a constraint, whereas social activism takes human rights as an end in itself. For the Humanity United article, these two terms ("supply chain" and "human rights") are made to exist side-by-side and with no contradiction. In one specific passage in the Humanity United article, these two terms (and their entailed understandings) are represented as part of a new picture of corporate responsibility:

‘As we’ve said consistently, *forced labour* and *human rights abuses* have no place in our supply chain,’ Magdi Batato, *Nestlé’s executive vice-president in charge of operations*, said in a written statement. ‘Nestlé believes that by working with suppliers we can make a *positive difference* to the sourcing of ingredients.’ (Associated Press) (emphasis added)

This excerpt exhibits several strategies which present a conception of slavery conducive to Nestlé's situation: it makes reference to another text in an instance of interdiscursivity, which is the use of other discourse types (Fairclough 10), in this case, journalism; it also makes use of key

terms which constitute the “social language” (Gee 45) of activism. In the first case, this excerpt mimics the typical news article by including an interview, but instead of the typical, brief introduction, the speaker’s credentials are presented using an appositive phrase. Additionally, the interviewee makes use of terms traditionally associated with rights activists: “forced labour,” “human rights abuses,” and “positive change” all attempt to denote belief in certain assumptions about human dignity and the role of business, but without allowing negotiation of hidden and foundational differences between these figured worlds (Gee 45)—namely, that profit is traditionally the prime directive in corporate culture, and that ensuring human rights is traditionally the prime directive among activists.

Of particular importance in the above excerpt, also, is the way that the company is being situated in time in relation to the issue. By using the word “consistently” rather than a reference to actual occasions, a loose, imprecise allusion to a preexisting social-based policy is communicated, but in such a way that this statement was the company’s policy *before* the events in question (litigation) occurred. By seeking to establish a precedent, the speaker is also attempting to legitimize the subject-sponsor’s motives for activism, turning what might otherwise be a cynical ploy to regain public trust into another act of a pre-existing propensity for social welfare.

Indefinite Nouns as Substitutions for Slaves' Plight in AS1

Throughout AS1, the predatory sourcing practices are referenced directly multiple times, but the victims themselves are referenced only in very selective ways: rather than as individuals, the advertorial often presents them as a part of a larger, abstract group. They are described as “migrant labour,” “impoverished migrant workers,” “underage workers,” “a Burmese worker,” or simply “workers,” but far more often they are referred to not as people, but indirectly through references to the seafood industry—there are mentions of “abuse in ...supply chains,” “abuse of migrant labour,” “practices,” “unregulated working conditions,” “booming industry,” “slave labour,” or “labour abuse.” Thus, the experience of indignity and the potential for empathy is relegated to the background.

Table 3.2 - Descriptions of Workers

“...migrant...” (2x)	“...working illegally...”	“...underage...”	“...impoverished...”
“...Myanmar...”	“...Cambodia...”	“...drunk...”	“...fighting...”

Table 3.3 – Indefinite Nouns Describing Slavery

“...violence...”	“...danger...”	“...forced labour...”	“...abuse in their supply chains...”
“...brutal and largely unregulated working conditions...”	“...problems it observed are systemic...”	“...slave labour...”	“...human rights abuses...”

The advertorial, however, makes use of an interview with a “Burmese worker,” but only after providing a context that problematizes direct empathy with his plight:

AS1 paragraph IV:

“The labourers come from Thailand’s much poorer neighbors Myanmar and Cambodia. Brokers illegally charge them fees to get jobs, trapping them into working on fishing vessels and at ports, mills and seafood farms in Thailand to pay back more money than they can ever earn.”

AS1 paragraph V:

“‘Sometimes, the net is too heavy and workers get pulled into the water and just disappear. When someone dies, he gets thrown into the water,’ one Burmese worker told the non-profit organization Verité in a report commissioned by Nestlé. ‘I have been working on this boat for 10 years. I have no savings. I am barely surviving,’ said another. ‘Life is very difficult here.’”

Throughout the article, there are 10 uses of the national identifier “Thailand” or “Thai,” and 6 total mentions of terms alluding to immigrant laborers: “migrant labour”; mention of a neighboring country as a worker’s homeland; “working illegally.” Of special importance here is how the workers are being presented in terms of nationality. The mention of Thailand in the headline, followed by repeated iterations of their “foreignness” to Thailand, subtly invokes another argument by which Nestlé may be absolved of involvement—the workers are in many cases undocumented. In paragraph X, the article goes so far as to blame the victims for their own working conditions, or at least make them appear less-sympathetic:

1. Boat captains and managers, along with workers, confirmed *violence* and *danger* in
2. the Thai seafood sector, a booming industry that exports \$7bn worth of products a year,
3. although managers said *workers sometimes got hurt because they were drunk and*
4. *fighting*. Boat captains rarely checked ages of workers, and Verité found underage
5. workers forced to fish. Workers said they labour without rest, their food and water are
6. minimal, outside contact is cut off, and they are given fake identities to hide that they
7. are *working illegally*. (emphasis added)

In this excerpt, it is especially notable that an appositive phrase (line 2) describing the size of the industry appears immediately before suggesting that workers are also to blame for their own situation. Here, the syntax emphasizes the fact that workers were “drunk and fighting,” while presenting the abuses as an abstraction, as “violence” and “danger,” rather than as the result of abuses with perpetrators; in other words, an agent is offered in the first case, so that the workers could be blamed for their own working condition, whereas the agents to blame for the overall state of their slavery are not implicated. In the last sentence, the use of the term “illegal” (line 7)—instead of, for instance, “undocumented”—activates a negative connotation that undermines empathy with the plight of the workers. Table 3.2 further outlines the terms used to link immigrant workers with negative traits.

Manipulation of Temporality, and Passive Constructions in AS1

Another notable linguistic strategy for issue-framing is use of verb tense to manipulate temporality. When describing the situation facing laborers, the effect on the consumer, or the actions of Nestlé itself, the present-progressive tense seems purposely avoided—with the exception of a present participial phrase and a relative clause functioning as the object of a prepositional phrase and excluding “plans,” *every main verb is cast in either the simple past or simple present tense*. When discussing the larger issue of modern slavery, as in the introductory paragraph, the verb tense makes the issue appear less “set in time,” and therefore less pressing:

“Impoverished migrant workers in Thailand are sold or lured by false promises and forced to catch and process fish that ends up in global food giant Nestlé’s supply chains.”
(Associated Press)

The use of a passive, simple-present construction makes it especially difficult for the reader to discern in what period of time the event took place or if it is even ongoing now after the date of the article's publication. The chronological uncertainty has the effect of disarming the typical urgency accompanying revelations of this type. This is precisely the point, it seems, of this article's hidden aim: to show competency in activism and "self-policing" by muddying the timeline of the disclosure, thus legitimizing both the timing and manner of Nestlé's response, since both of these are crucial to establishing an activist's ethos—as McDonnell points out, the corporate activist must avoid accusations of cynical motivation if they are to be taken seriously (53).

Throughout, AS1 is constructing the issue of slavery not as the result of corporate culture, but as a result of economic imperatives ("...Thailand's much poorer neighbors..."), illegal immigration and "false promises" from amorphous "suppliers." The result is that the disclosure, itself "the real story," is presented as an investigative piece, all in an attempt to preclude previous coverage of the disclosure by other groups, which is described in paragraph III:

"Nestlé, among the biggest food companies in the world, launched the investigation in December 2014, after reports from news outlets and non-governmental organizations tied brutal and largely unregulated working conditions to their shrimp, prawns and Purina brand pet foods."

Again, human beings are omitted from the picture in favor of "working conditions," and the last item in the sentence shows strong connotative ties, as with the example describing illegal working status, and "Purina brand pet foods" is saved for last, with the effect of trivializing the disclosure. The sentence itself is particularly hard to navigate, with the normally-direct journalistic style suspended in favor of circumlocutory syntax; taken in its simplest form, the second part of the sentence is easily reduced to the clause "after news outlets and non-

governmental organizations reported [...],” and each slot of the excerpt makes use of inversed nominalization to remove agency from these same groups.

Overall, in its treatment of the issue of slavery and supply chain management, the Humanity United article presents a universe in which a “purchaser” is not directly culpable for its “purchasing,” but in which a corporation may yet exhibit agency and perform the role of activist, *thus precluding the need for more traditional forms of activism*. In fact, this socially-motivated agency seems to have been the most important trait exhibited in the article, given the number of times Nestlé was featured in the subject slot of a sentence (7 times overall) and the description of the company’s stance as being communicated “consistently.”

As a result of these linguistic strategies (simple past tense, passive voice), the issue of “supply-chain abuse” is painted as indeterminately-timed, complex, and the result of hidden forces. This specific framing, I argue, is an attempt to legitimize the very corporate activism that the article spends 253 words (see below) propounding—they are setting up a situation that calls for a very specific type of activist, one which just happens to be available and which already has started to do something about it:

AS1 subtitle:

[...]global food giant reports abuse of migrant labour among its suppliers in Thai seafood industry[...]

AS1 paragraph II:

The unusual disclosure comes from Geneva-based Nestlé itself, which in an act of self-policing announced the conclusions of its year-long internal investigation on Monday.

AS1 paragraph III:

Nestlé, among the biggest food companies in the world, launched the investigation in December 2014[...]

AS1 paragraph VI:

Nestlé said it would post the reports online as well as a detailed year-long solution strategy throughout 2016 as part of efforts to protect workers. It has promised to impose new requirements on all potential suppliers and train boat owners and captains about human rights, possibly with a demonstration vessel and rewards for altering their practices. It also plans to bring in outside auditors and assign a high-level Nestlé manager to make sure change is under way.

AS1 paragraph IX:

For its study (pdf), Verité interviewed more than 100 people, including about 80 workers from Myanmar and Cambodia, as well as boat owners, shrimp farm owners, site supervisors and representatives of Nestlé’s suppliers. It visited fishing ports and fishmeal packing plants, shrimp farms and docked fishing boats, all in Thailand.

AS1 paragraph XII:

Monday’s disclosure is rare. While multinational companies in industries from garments to electronics say they investigate allegations of abuse in their supply chains, they rarely share negative findings.

AS1 paragraph XVI:

Nestlé promises to publicly report its progress each year.

The construction of the issue itself ultimately serves as the backdrop for the first half of the hybridized corporate-activist identity—by showing agency and pure intention (“pure” by avoiding mentioning the bottom line or economic imperatives), the advertorial builds the activist not only by propounding its plans and programs, but by constructing a problem so widespread and “systemic” that *only* an organization like Nestlé could address it.

Linguistic Strategies used to Frame, Address or Invoke other Companies, the Consumer, the Press, and the Slavers

Whereas the advertorial's framing of the issue itself (see previous section) served mainly to establish an *activist identity* for its subject-sponsor, the framing, addressing or invoking of other actors (especially corporate counterparts) served to establish an accompanying *corporate identity* that shows, through comparisons, the subject-sponsor's exceptionality to "normal" corporate behaviors, especially reacting to negative disclosures with a sense of self-interest.

The sheer number of actors involved in the first advertorial is notable; all of the following actors and stakeholders are mentioned in the article: Nestlé; Verité and Freedom House, the NGOs conducting "social audits" of supply chains; unnamed NGOs and media outlets; the slaves themselves; ship captains and farm owners; other "multinational companies"; and food sellers. The complex web of interrelationships fashioned in the mention of so many parties seems to serve a purpose—namely to legitimize the company's corporate activism and delegitimize actions of activists or even normal individuals by appealing to complexity while positioning the company (the sponsor) itself as an "expert."

Throughout the article, the author emphasizes Nestlé's stance in relation to other companies—in the caption of the opening graphic, as well as in the second, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth paragraphs. Out of a total of 802 words in the entire article, 187 of them (23.3%) are used to highlight Nestlé's position in relation to other companies (emphasis is added):

AS1 paragraph II:

- a. The *unusual* disclosure comes from Geneva-based Nestlé itself[...]
- b. A study, carried out by Geneva-based Nestlé, found *virtually all US and European companies* buying seafood from Thailand are exposed to the same risks of abuse in supply chains.

AS1 paragraph XI:

But the Amherst, Massachusetts-based group (Verité) said *many of the problems it observed are systemic and not unique to Nestlé*; migrant workers throughout Thailand’s seafood sector are vulnerable to abuses as they are recruited, hired and employed, said Verité.

AS1 paragraph XII:

While *multinational companies in industries from garments to electronics* say they investigate allegations of abuse in their supply chains, they rarely share negative findings.

AS1 paragraph XIII:

“The propensity of the *PR and legal departments of companies* is not to ‘fess up, not to even say that are looking carefully into a problem for fear they will get hit with lawsuits.”

AS1 paragraph XV:

- a. Some of the litigation cites the reports from AP, which tracked slave-caught fish to the supply of *giant food sellers, such as Walmart, Sysco and Kroger*, and popular brands of canned pet food, such as Fancy Feast, Meow Mix and Iams.
- b. The *US companies* have all said they strongly condemn labour abuse and are taking steps to prevent it.

In all of these excerpts, Nestlé is painted as an exception to “normal” corporate behaviors and motivations. In the last lines, in paragraphs XV and XVI, the comparison is such that the activism of other corporations are delegitimized while Nestlé’s own are given credibility:

1. Some of the litigation cites the reports from AP, which tracked slave-caught fish to the
2. supply chains of giant food sellers, such as Walmart, Sysco and Kroger, and popular
3. brands of canned pet food, such as Fancy Feast, Meow Mix and Iams. It can turn up as
4. calamari at fine restaurants, as imitation crab in a sushi roll or as packages of frozen
5. snapper relabelled [sic] with store brands that land on dinner tables. *The US companies*
6. *have all said they strongly condemn labour abuse and are taking steps to prevent it.*
7. (paragraph break)
8. *Nestlé promises to publicly report its progress each year.*
(emphasis added)

In lines 6-8, the article's final three, there is a powerful dialectic being presented: that of action vs. words. By including only statements—and in intermediate voice—of other companies about their “steps” and detailed accounts of the subject-sponsor's own, the author invokes an assumption that, morally, raises Nestlé far above its corporate counterparts; it implies that while other companies merely give lip service to their activism, Nestlé has acted first, and published the fact only afterwards. As seen in the next section, it is precisely this assumption that the author of the next advertorial (published as a response to the first) seeks to undermine multiple times. This suggests that part of establishing a credible hybrid identity relies on demonstrating the sponsor's being an exception to typical corporate behaviors—it is these behaviors and values that other companies are meant to embody, and that the subject-sponsor is shown to transcend.

While there are numerous references to other companies and to Nestlé itself, there is only one passage that addresses the *consumers* directly, and then only painting them as irate pet owners. The only sequence wherein an everyday buyer is invoked is in the penultimate paragraph, and in such a way that, again, the fruits of slave labor are presented as “systemic” and not as a matter of consumer choice: “[Slave-caught fish] can turn up as calamari in fine restaurants, as imitation crab in a sushi roll or as packages of frozen snapper relabelled [sic] with store brands that land on dinner tables.” This passage presents consumption not as a matter of choice, but a matter of course, thus assuming that there are set patterns to buying practices which make complicity impossible to avoid. In this single invocation of the reader, there is also the tacit assumption that slave labor is too complex, too big of a problem to be solved by simple changes in consumption. (This passage addresses another discourse involving an ongoing boycott movement started several decades before.)

AS1's presentation of other reports, specifically the news reports which seemed to have prompted the investigation, are also presented as being "elemental" rather than conscious—news organizations are mentioned twice, in the paragraphs III and XV:

AS1 paragraph III:

Nestlé, among the biggest food companies in the world, launched the investigation in December 2014, after *reports from news outlets and non-governmental organizations* tied brutal and largely unregulated working conditions to their shrimp, prawns and Purina brand pet foods. (emphasis added)

AS1 paragraph XV:

Some of the litigation cites the *reports from AP*, which tracked slave-caught fish to the supply chains of giant food sellers, such as Walmart, Sysco, and Kroger, and popular brands of canned pet food, such as Fancy Feast, Meow Mix, and Iams. (emphasis added)

In both paragraphs, the phrase "reports from" is followed by a generic identifier for the source of the reports that constitute the news delivered; neither the news organizations themselves nor the people who are the sources of information are explicitly identified. These same actors, then, are relegated to the wider context of the event, not as having played a vital role, and thus the use of generic identifiers portrays the subject-sponsor's own activism as arising out of social obligation, not a response to negative disclosures.

Moreover, in the first excerpt, the report is referenced in the form of a nominative phrase ("originating from AP") instead of a clause in the active voice ("AP reports"). This is particularly significant because these reports spurred the studies the article references, but, as McDonnell points out, corporate activists must appear to do their work not only for commercial ends (5). The presentation of the report as having an origin but no stated agency (as that of a particular investigative reporter) thus situates the disclosures as matters of course rather than the result of

activism. The subject-sponsor's own activism, then, may be received as an appropriate response rather than a reaction to negative press.

This removal of personal agency from news organizations is also present in the article's descriptions of the laborers—in each case, with phrasal genitives and passive constructions (discussed above as well), respectively, until the syntax seems to posit that the “slavers” themselves are something of an “absent cause,” almost like a faceless historical force. There are a total of 11 passive constructions in the article, of which 8 are reference the plight of the slaves:

Impoverished migrant workers in Thailand *are sold or lured by false promises and forced to catch and process fish* that ends up in global food giant Nestlé's supply chains[...] workers *get pulled* into the water[...] when someone dies *he gets thrown* into the water[...] workers sometimes *got hurt* because they were drunk and fighting[...] Verité found underage workers *forced to fish* [...] outside contact *is cut off* [...] *they are given fake identities* to hide that they are working illegally[...] (emphasis added)

If there is a villain being created in this story, its role is distributed evenly between “brokers,” “boat owners,” “captains,” and “site supervisors,” and, as discussed above, the laborers themselves. The use of passive constructions has the rhetorical effect of placing the cause beyond even economics, even further away from Nestlé and its responsibility. The goal of these communicative strategies is to mask the object of scorn; without an object of scorn clearly identified, the typical indignation, usually followed by calls to boycott or for government intervention, is not even possible.

The identity for Nestlé that arises out of this intersection of issue and actor is of a distant benefactor stemming the tide of history—as opposed to a corporation reacting to litigation and public outrage. The previous disclosure of slavery itself, the event that prompted the “social audit,” is syntactically “buried” in the third paragraph so that the company's “social audit” of

itself seems spontaneous and demonstrative of a profound, socially-based agency. And, given the article's syntactic construction of the slaver as an "absent cause," supply-chain slavery is no longer, categorically, an issue for which the purchaser is culpable—and yet, Nestlé is shown to be expending time and effort on the problem.

As James Paul Gee points out, linguistic expressive practices do not occur in a vacuum, but are linked with other combinations of "doing and being" (5). In order to be taken seriously as an activist, it would not have been sufficient for Nestlé to simply conduct an audit of its supply chain—it would have to have been "first to the scene" and then reacted out of a belief in social justice, not a public relations imperative. But in order to demonstrate the right combination of "saying-doing-being," the advertorial had also to create a history for the issue it addresses as well as a role for its subject within that issue. Basically, the advertorial had not only to show its subject's goodwill, but how it has already acted out of that goodwill. The advertorial's subject-sponsor had to be shown *preempting* typical, "thoughtless" corporate practices in order for the advertorial to establish an identity for that subject-sponsor that would lead to identity-based trust.

In the face of a potentially-hostile audience who also has the ability to respond in the form of "sharing" and "retweeting," the author presents a universe wherein the typical response is arrested before it can even begin. And what is more, a multinational corporation is shown to have already started that very response, thus demonstrating that a multinational is as capable as any NGO of activism and socially-based policy. Ultimately, it is the public conception of activism itself that is being renegotiated in this article—specifically, who can be said to be an activist, and in what situation is an action said to be "activism."

Introduction to AS2

Whereas AS1 attempts to place Nestlé far from the “scene of the crime” by 1) proving its own exception to “corporate-ness” through comparisons with other actors and 2) reconstructing the issue by removing the “villain,” the consumer, and the victim from the picture, Mondelēz’s advertorial attempts to place Nestlé back into its old category of “typical multinational.” Using notably more informal diction and notably less-complex grammatical structures, the article creates a system of causation in which Nestlé is not only complicit, but is also acting selfishly—and in typical “corporate” fashion—by “going public” following the disclosure of slavery by other groups. While the Humanity United advertorial uses mentions of other companies, discursive distance, and temporal devices to place Nestlé in the hybridized role of activist-corporation, Mondelēz’s advertorial seeks to convince the reader that Nestlé is just another multinational apologizing after-the-fact in order to save face, and that its disclosures were not in any way “activism,” but merely corporate maneuvering.

Excerpts from AS2

- I. It's hard to think of an issue that you would less like your company to be associated with than modern slavery. Yet last November Nestlé, the world's largest foodmaker and one of the most recognisable household brands, went public with the news it had found forced labour in its supply chains in Thailand and that its customers were buying products tainted with the blood and sweat of poor, unpaid and abused migrant workers.
- II. By independently disclosing that Nestlé customers had unwittingly bought products contaminated by the very worst labour abuses, the company said it was moving into a new era of self-policing of its own supply chains. A year-long investigation by the company confirmed media reports that the seafood industry in Thailand is riddled with forced labour and human trafficking and that slave labour was involved in the production of its Fancy Feast catfood brand.
- III. Nestlé also made sure to make it clear that no other company sourcing seafood from Thailand, the world's third-largest seafood exporter, could have avoided being exposed to the same risks.
- IV. "As we've said consistently, forced labour and human rights abuses have no place in our supply chain," said Magdi Batato, Nestlé's executive vice-president in charge of operations, in a written statement. "Nestlé believes that by working with suppliers we can make a positive difference to the sourcing of ingredients."
- V. The disclosure was considered by many to be ground-breaking. Nick Grono, the chief executive of NGO the Freedom Fund, which has invested heavily in anti-trafficking initiatives in Thailand, believes Nestlé's admission could be a considerable force in shifting the parameters of what can be expected of businesses when it comes to supply chain accountability.
- VI. "Nestlé's decision to conduct this investigation is to be applauded," he says. "If you've got one of the biggest brands in the world proactively coming out and admitting that they have found slavery in their business operations, then it's potentially a huge game-changer and could lead to real and sustained change in how supply chains are managed."
- VII. The research (pdf) for Nestlé's report was conducted by US corporate accountability business Verité, which works closely with organisations trying to help improve their supply chain transparency.
- VIII. Last year Verité was involved in another exercise in self-disclosure by outdoor clothing company Patagonia, which announced that it had discovered several points in its supply chain in Taiwan where forced labour and unethical recruitment practices were flourishing.
- IX. Verité's chief executive, Dan Viederman, said: "In the last six months Verité has been involved in two high-profile disclosures from major brands and one of the most important lessons for us to recognise is that in neither case did the companies suffer greatly in terms of being associated with these labour conditions. Instead, they received some credit [for] being bold enough to be associated with this."

[...]

- X. There is also a growing legal imperative for many large multinationals to start seriously engaging with labour abuses in their business operations. Legislation in both the US and the UK requires larger companies to publish annual reports on their efforts to keep their businesses slavery-free.

[...]

- XI. Nestlé is one of the companies facing legal action in the US. Last week the company, along with Cargill and Archer Daniels Midland, failed in its bid to get the US Supreme Court to throw out a lawsuit seeking to hold them liable for the alleged use of child slaves in cocoa farming in the Ivory Coast.
- XII. This puts the company in the unfortunate position of disclosing slavery in one part of its operations, while at the same time fighting through the courts to fend off accusations that it exists in another – more profitable – part of its business.
- XIII. By the time Nestlé owned up to slavery in the Thai seafood industry it was accepted knowledge.
- XIV. Andrew Wallis, chief executive of Unseen UK, an anti-trafficking charity advocating for more supply chain accountability, said: “For me there is a big issue with one part of Nestlé saying, ‘OK we have been dragged along with everyone else to face the issue of slavery in Thailand and so let’s take the initiative and do something about it’, and at the same time fighting tooth and nail through the courts to avoid charges of child slavery in its core operations in the Ivory Coast.”
- XV. He argues that Nestlé’s self-reporting could also be seen as a tactic to head off or deflate other pending civil litigation suits.

[...]

Linguistic Strategies used to Frame, Address or Invoke the Issue of Slavery and Supply Chain Management in AS2

The issue of modern slavery, in AS2, is notably simpler than in AS1; it doesn't attempt to reconstruct the issue, but simply names it, thus relying on the reader's previous exposures to the subject and also in its use of the word "modern" (by saying "*modern* slavery," it denotes that slavery is itself archaic and barbaric, which also contributes to connotations of the same). At the end of the first sentence, in paragraph I, the issue is invoked for subsequent discussion:

1. It's hard to think of an issue that you would less like your company to be associated
2. with than modern slavery. Yes last November Nestlé, the world's largest foodmaker
3. and one of the most recognized household brands, went public with the news it had
4. found forced labour in its supply chains in Thailand and that its customers were buying
5. products tainted with the blood and sweat of poor, unpaid and abused migrant
6. workers.

There are a number of things drawing the discourse analyst's attention in this passage. Firstly, the opening sentence sets up a discussion not of history, but of perception—it hints that the association of a company with slavery is itself harmful, something to be avoided, and possibly serious enough to prompt a publicity campaign. Perception is something to be managed and tended, not as something that just "happens." Second, the connection between Nestlé, enslaved workers, and the consumer is established outright rather than implied; by obviating the first advertorial's conception of other actors (boat captains, brokers, etc.), Nestlé is made to appear culpable, reticent to speak out (having known before but not "gone public"), and having betrayed the trust of consumers at the same time. While the workers were described in the Humanity United advertorial using simple present tense or passive syntactic constructions, the opening of the second advertorial uses past progressive (see line 4 above) to place the admission at the exact moment consumers were continuing to ignorantly buy "tainted" products. Third, the discovery

itself is described in past-perfect tense, implying that the company had known about its supply-chain slavery, but did not speak out.

This excerpt is the first in a series of attempts to place Nestlé among other corporations, thus characterizing its motives and actions as the result of economic imperatives. The second advertorial, in diametrical opposition to the first, constructs a corporate identity wherein the corporate and the social are categorically opposed—essentially, by its foregoing to establish context of the issue, it relies on the stance of the publication and its archetypal reader to discredit Nestlé’s activism, or, more specifically, its previous advertorial.

Linguistic Strategies used to Frame, Address or Invoke the Actors in AS2

While including the same quotations from a Nestlé executive and from Nick Grono of Freedom House, Nestlé’s own voice is reported in intermediate voice, as the first advertorial had done with other companies, painting them as absent but *also as only a single voice*, rather than as the definitive one. The article places Nestlé back among other companies, which means they would be subject to the same categorization (as dictated by the stance of the publication) others would be. It places Nestlé alongside Cargill and Archer Daniels Midland as defendants in child slavery lawsuits.

Throughout, the Mondelēz advertorial presents Nestlé—and other similar corporations—not as agents, as the previous one had done, but as subject to multiple imperatives which just happen to nullify the possibility of genuine activism. Essentially, the public disclosure of slavery, which is presented in the first advertorial as premeditated, is presented in the second as a reaction to public opinion, to negative press, to litigation, and to the threat of regulation. In the previous

article, the word “company” is used only once, and is all the other times referred to as simply “Nestlé,” whereas the Mondelēz article begins by referring to Nestlé, and others, as “companies,” moving in paragraph X to a discussion of “large multinationals” while using “also” to establish coherence between that paragraph and a previous mention of implementation:

1. There is also a growing legal imperative for many large multinationals to start seriously
2. engaging with labour abuses in their business operations. Legislation in both the US and
3. the UK requires larger companies to publish annual reports on their efforts to keep their
4. business slavery-free.

This passage participates in the theme of the entire piece in three ways: it puts Nestlé back among the category of “large multinationals” by addressing all companies addressed so far—including Patagonia, also accused of supply-chain slavery; it implies that, contrary to the emphasis in AS1, “engaging with labour abuses” is a recent development, thus countering the attempt in the first advertorial to demonstrate proactive activism; and the passage introduces another actor, indirectly, which was notably absent from the first, legislators, which in turn offers a new explanation, other than activism, for the disclosure.

The central of concern of many such passages suggests that what is being attacked is the motive (as a way to imply values). This suggests that the portrayal of *proactive agency*—not merely of reactive agency—surrounding shows of activism are central to the construction of a hybridized corporate-activist identity. The article also characterizes its sources in such a way as to qualify some to speak about slavery, others not to—and this line is put precisely between non-profits (or charities) and business interests. Verité—which in the previous advertorial had been described as a “non-profit organization” and in the second is referred to as a “US corporate accountability business” that “works closely with organizations trying to improve their supply chain transparency”—is made to appear as an apologist for business interests. This description is contrasted with another provided by a later source, Andrew Wallis of “anti-trafficking charity”

Unseen UK, who described it as a “charity advocating for more supply chain accountability.” The former’s position to comment is delegitimized by being associated with business interests, and the latter is made to represent traditional activism, the charity. In this instance, it is more or less as Sharon Livesay claims in her analysis of institutional advertisements in *The New York Times*: the advertorial invokes other sources and voices to reframe a conversation (132).

Overall, the main ways in which the Mondelēz advertorial discredits the identity constructed in the first sample is by reestablishing actors that the first advertorial attempted to remove: namely, the consumer, the legislator, and the traditional activist. All of these are emphasized in the Mondelēz advertorial to such a degree that initially-innocuous descriptions of Nestlé and its practices are undone by subtle criticisms and questioning of the company’s motives in commissioning the study.

Discussion of AS1 and AS2

Based on the strategies used in both advertorials, I have observed the following about attempts at corporate/activist identity hybridization of a corporate actor in a series of advertorials:

1. In AS1, attempts at hybridization of corporate identity attempted to show that the company’s “activism” was premeditated rather than a reaction to litigation or other imperative; AS2, however, sought to reverse this same impression. Thus, the legitimization/de-legitimization of the subject-sponsor’s *activist identity seemed to derive mainly from recreation of the issue itself*, whether in terms of timing, weightiness, or causes.

2. In both advertorials, *corporate identity* was established mainly by situating the actor in relation to other companies, showing exceptionality or similarity, thereby invoking or defying existing types of categorization (namely, the dichotomy between business interest and social activism). The boundaries between these categories were renegotiated in the first advertorial, and invoked wholesale in the second.

Points 1 and 2, above, reflected themes that appeared in all six samples rather than only in this paired example. The subject-sponsor's corporate identity, established in point 2, works in tandem with established motivation, which is the "activist" side of this same hybrid identity.

Each of the two halves of this hybridized identity, the corporate and the activist, is being constructed at the same time: as the subject-sponsor attempts to legitimize its own activism through a reconstruction of the issue itself, it also sets itself apart from other corporate interests by invoking other actors. From this, I gather that the authors are keenly aware that it would be counterproductive to present as an activist a corporation who is just like every other corporation. In order to prove itself sufficiently activist, the subject-sponsor must also prove itself to be an exception to typical corporate actions—that is, it must first defy the longstanding categorizations that accompany the actions of large multinationals.

The Role of Temporality in the Construction of an Activist Persona: An Advertorial Campaign featuring Patagonia

Of the four advertorial samples examined in this section, none of them are sponsored by Patagonia directly—meaning that the company’s name doesn’t appear in the banner at the top of the article. This analysis, however, treats them as advertorials, given the increasing number of ways an advertorial may circumvent disclosure (Kong 772) and also based on (1) the number of articles that featured Patagonia in this same section of *The Guardian* and (2), as this analysis concludes, certain discursive themes (namely “proactive” activism) occur across each sample. AS3 (appeared Feb 12 ‘17), AS4 (Jan 4 ‘17), AS5 (Feb 7 ‘17), and AS6 (Nov 17 ‘16) all appeared in the Sustainable Business section of *The Guardian*.

As noted in table 3.1, the social issues under consideration are: public land rights/public services, the gender wage gap, and ecology. AS4 and AS5 represent two advertorials in a series, with AS4 being a proposal to leave a trade fair in protest of Utah lawmakers proposing to privatize newly-public lands, and AS5 being a report of Patagonia’s leaving that same trade fair. AS3 is a hybrid commercial advertisement/image advertorial, in which a product is promoted at the same time as the company’s activism is showcased, often quite overtly. AS6 is a profile of four different companies and the ways in which they are addressing the gender wage gap, with Patagonia leading off—where Patagonia is, predictably, shown not only to have addressed the problem but never having been culpable.

All of these articles address different social issues, but there are noticeable overlaps in the strategies used to address the company’s attempts at identity hybridization, with the most notable ones being the ways that Patagonia is positioned in relation to other companies and actors and another being the portrayal of the motivation behind the company’s activism. Using references to the social issue itself and to other actors, these advertorials position Patagonia as proactively

pursuing a socially-oriented agenda, on a wide variety of issues, and always without reference to public opinion or litigation. The timeframe of events featured in the advertorials, however, is not one in which the company is alerted to these same issues by others—it is one in which Patagonia has *already* found, considered, and moved toward a solution, thus demonstrating a socially-based agency which preempts standard avenues of activism, either from publications, NGOs, or citizens.

In the following analysis, I provide cross-sections of the four remaining advertorials, looking at individual portions and establishing common discursive themes between them. Even though AS3, AS5 and AS6 cover different social issues (with AS4 and AS5 covering the same event), the strategies in each one show notable convergences in the following areas: the need to establish a precedent of Patagonia’s “proactive” social activism. According to Verité’s website, Patagonia is, like Nestlé, under contract with them to address allegations of labor abuses in their supply chains. These specific allegations, unlike the previous paired example, do not appear in the advertorials themselves, which suggests that this advertorial campaign may be, as McDonnell suggests, a way to preempt targeted activism in the future (54).

Excerpts from AS3, AS4, AS5 and AS6

AS3

- I. For the past three years, Alexander Nolte and Oliver Spies, surfing buddies and co-owners of Langbrett, a German retailer with four stores that sells surf gear and outdoor apparel, have been haunted by news reports connecting many of the products they sell to an emerging but serious environmental threat: microfiber pollution. Synthetic textiles, such as fleece jackets, send tiny plastic fibers into wastewater after washing. These bits eventually make their way into rivers, lakes and our oceans, where they pose health threats to plants and animals. The two men knew they had to act.
- II. “We said, ‘either we have to stop selling fleece [apparel] or we have to think of a solution’,” explains Nolte. “So we went out to our beer garden and said ‘what can we do?’”

[...]
- III. To date, no studies have shown that microfibers cause health problems in humans. But that’s cold comfort to Nolte: “Scientific research is slow, so it might take another generation to find out what harm [these pollutants] will do. I don’t want to wait that long.”

[...]
- IV. Guppy Friend attracted the attention of Patagonia last summer when word about the project reached Phil Graves, managing director of Tin Shed Ventures, Patagonia’s investment fund. Patagonia already had a relationship with Langbrett, which sells Patagonia clothing.
- V. Patagonia is interested in reducing microfiber pollution, based on the results of a study it commissioned at the University of California at Santa Barbara in 2015. Researchers calculated the microfibers shed from Patagonia outerwear during laundry, and found that a single fleece jacket sheds as many as 250,000 synthetic fibers. Using sales numbers, the researchers extrapolated that about 100,000 jackets are in use worldwide each year, and washing them would produce enough plastic to make 11,900 grocery bags.

[...]
- VI. Patagonia gave Nolte and Spies financial support – a €100,000 (\$108,000) grant – to develop the mesh bag and a supply chain for it. The duo also launched the Kickstarter campaign that ran from last October to December and raised €28,640 (\$30,604) from 668 backers.
- VII. In exchange for the grant, Nolte and Spies agreed to let Patagonia be the first retailer, aside from Langbrett, to sell Guppy Friend.

- VIII. Patagonia plans to sell Guppy Friend at the cost of buying and shipping it from Nolte and Spies – the California company won't be making a profit. It hasn't settled on a retail price yet, but it will likely be between \$20-\$30.

[...]

- IX. In the meantime, Nolte says he's gotten a lot of interest from retailers. So far, he and Nolte have 30,000 pre-orders for Guppy Friend, from Patagonia and other retailers he could not yet name.

[...]

- X. "We know that higher quality fabrics shed fewer fibers," he says. He hopes the testing standard will make that clear to brands and consumers. But eventually it might take government regulation to curb the sale of high-shed synthetics, he says.

- XI. But with Guppy Friend, he says: "We can act now. We do not need to wait for anyone."

AS4

- I. Utah, a state rich in epic landscapes and national parks, is becoming ground zero for a fight between the \$646bn outdoor industry and state lawmakers over public land management.
- II. At a trade show for outdoor clothing and gear makers in Salt Lake City this week, two prominent figures from the industry called on their peers to move the semi-annual event out of the state unless Utah leaders stop supporting efforts by Republicans in Congress to transfer or sell federal land to states. Utah governor Gary Herbert was also called out for challenging a federal law that allowed President Obama to create the new, 1.4m-acre Bears Ears National Monument in southeast Utah last month.

[...]

- III. Metcalf and Chouinard's criticism reflect growing concerns by their industry and outdoor enthusiasts, such as hunters, over what they see as public land grabs by state politicians who want to open up more of that land to oil and gas development. Such a move would limit or eliminate public access for recreation, disrupt wildlife and pose threats to air and water quality.
- IV. In 2014, a lengthy study found that if Utah took control of 31.2m acres of federal land in the state, for oil and gas development, it could generate around \$50m in profit each year – but only if oil and gas prices were to remain at the 2014 rates. In Utah and other states, including Wyoming, in which some lawmakers are pushing for transfers, opponents worry that if the states find that they can't afford to maintain those lands, they'll be forced to sell them to private buyers.
- V. Last week, Republicans in the House in Congress voted to eliminate a rule that requires the government to calculate the value of federal land, including the value created through recreation, before transferring or selling it to states or others. That change, if enacted, could remove a major barrier for speeding up land transfers.
- VI. Utah is a fitting place for a battle over public land. The state is home to Arches, Canyonlands and Zion national parks, as well as some 22m acres overseen by the federal Bureau of Land Management. The state is filled with red rock canyons and rivers that are the stuff of climbers' and whitewater paddlers' dreams.

[...]

- VII. In a statement, the OIA said it will continue to take feedback from its members on determining the best venue for the trade show going forward. It added: "We must be clear that protection of America's public lands, including those in Utah, are critical and any threat to their protection is a threat to the outdoor industry."
- VIII. Patagonia's CEO Rose Marcario, who was at the trade show, said the company relies on the event to meet buyers and partners and promote its philanthropic efforts, but she added that "standing up for our principles is always our top priority". She also noted that Patagonia alone can't force change in Utah's capital, and hoped that "other brands in the industry would follow our lead".

- IX. A spokesperson for Herbert said on Wednesday she didn't know whether the governor has read either Metcalf's opinion piece or Chouinard's letter. But his deputy chief of staff issued a statement on Tuesday rejecting the claim that the governor is out to destroy the state's public lands. The statement said Herbert's objection to the Bears Ears designation was the "sweeping unilateral" nature of the move by an outgoing administration.

[...]

- X. The trade show is under contract to remain at Salt Lake City's Salt Palace Convention Center through 2018, but negotiations for the event in 2019 and onward will begin soon.

[...]

AS5

- I. Patagonia has just become the first retailer to pull out of a big industry trade show in Utah to protest state leaders' efforts to strip federal protection of public land.
- II. The company's announcement Tuesday came after its founder, Yvon Chouinard, wrote an open letter last month urging Utah governor Gary Herbert to stop trying to undo the decision by former president Obama to create the Bears Ears National Monument.

[...]

- III. Patagonia wasn't the only prominent retailer to call out Utah for fighting against the interest of the outdoor industry. The founder of climbing and ski equipment retailer Black Diamond, Petre Metcalf, wrote an opinion piece in the Salt Lake Tribune that called on the trade show to leave Utah.
- IV. In a statement announcing Patagonia's departure from the trade show, Patagonia CEO Rose Marcario said the company is "confident other outdoor manufacturers and retailers will join us in moving our investments to a state that values our industry and promotes public lands conservation." The trade show organizer said it will be reviewing options for the event's location next year, but has not ruled out Utah.

[...]

AS6

[...]

- I. While that's the global picture, things aren't much better at home in the US. According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, in 2015, female full-time employees earned about \$0.79 for every dollar made by full-time male employees. For minorities, the data is even more disparaging: African American women earn \$0.64, Native American women earn \$0.59 and Latinas earn \$0.54.
- II. Now, with pressure from legislators, investors and the public sector rising, more states and companies are proactively taking strides to decrease the disparity and address these damning numbers. In August, Massachusetts passed an equal pay law, making it illegal for employees to ask potential hires about their salary histories. California also tightened up its equal pay act this year, calling for companies to look beyond job titles and ensure that men and women who do the same types of work are paid the same wage.
- III. California-based Patagonia, an outdoor clothing retailer known for its activism as much as its windbreakers and fleece jackets, signed the White House pledge in August. But they've long had a tradition of catering to female employees, says Dean Carter, vice president of human resources and shared services. Currently, the company, which has a female CEO, Rose Marcario, has more women than men on staff – 866 v 862, respectively.
- IV. Carter attributes the company's ability to retain female employees to its culture and generous benefits: 12 weeks of fully paid family medical leave applicable to both men and women, with no limitations on the number of times it can be used; 16 weeks fully paid maternity leave; and 12 weeks fully paid paternity leave. Patagonia also offers free on-site childcare to all staff members, both at their Ventura headquarters and their distribution warehouse in Reno.
- V. "It's true, there are financial costs to offering on-site child care, but the benefits – financial and otherwise – pay for themselves every year," Marcario says. "As a CEO, it's not even a question in my mind. Business leaders [and their chief financial officers] should take note."
- VI. The company's child care program began in 1983. Three decades later, the company says it actually recoups 91% of the program costs through tax benefits, employee retention and employee engagement. Patagonia also says its family-friendly policies have helped improve productivity and have resulted in more women in management positions, and it's proud of the fact that a full 100% of new mothers return to work after taking maternity leave.

[...]

Linguistic Strategies used to Frame Social Issues in AS3, AS4, AS5, and AS6

The first five paragraphs of AS6 address only the issue itself, first describing the ongoing problem, and then giving a clear picture of the moment when (the “now”) the advertorial is being written:

Now, with pressure from legislators, investors and the public sector rising, more states and companies are proactively taking strides to decrease the disparity and address those damning numbers.(Chhabra)

The issue of gender disparity is thus presented not as the object of traditional activism or journalism, but the concern of the private sector as well as that of the public. Within this conception of gender wage disparity, it is everyone and anyone’s job to address it, allowing anyone—but especially companies—to take the role of social activist. By invoking the issue at the same time as listing the actors, the advertorial is also creating a role for the activist and renegotiating the “rules” by which someone may be called an “activist.”

Likewise, in AS4, the issue is framed not by description only, but by inclusion of specific actors: “Utah, a state rich in epic landscapes and national parts, is becoming ground zero for a fight between the \$646bn outdoor industry and state lawmakers over public land management.” This excerpt also places the issue of land management in time, using present progressive tense (“is becoming”) to suggest the issue’s imminence; in AS5, a follow-up to AS4, the issue is framed simply as “state leaders’ efforts to strip federal protection of public land.” The same is true of AS3—the issue of microfiber pollution of waterways is introduced by way of featuring two members of the outdoor industry:

1. For the *past three years*, Alexander Nolte and Oliver Spies, surfing buddies and co-
2. owners of Langbrett, a German retailer with four stores that sells surf gear and outdoor
3. apparel, have been haunted by news reports connecting many of the products they sell
4. to an emerging but serious environmental threat: microfiber pollution. Synthetic
5. textiles, such as fleece jackets, *send* tiny plastic fibers into wastewater after washing.
6. These bits eventually *make* their way into rivers, lakes and our oceans, where they *pose*

7. health threats to plants and animals. *The two men knew they had to act.* (emphasis added)

This excerpt demonstrates a key strategy used in all these advertorials: by constructing the issue around a certain set of actors, it also creates that issue's history by introducing the principal actor, the one equipped by placement to address the problem. Also of note in this passage is the use of the simple present tense (e.g., “send,” “make their way,” “pose”) to situate the issue itself in the permanent present up to the date of printing, making the actual time-frame of the issue indeterminate and the appropriate course of action (for the reader) undetermined. It is the uncertainty surrounding the timeliness of the issue—and presumably the far-reaching consequences in the thus obfuscated chronology of environmental events and their impact the current natural environment—that legitimizes the efforts of the two men, who are painted not as businessmen with an idea for a product but as environmentalists who also happen to sell outdoor products; most importantly, though, *they are presented as having been working proactively and constantly on the issue, long before the story entered the public arena.* It is through this strategy that the authors of these advertorials legitimize their subject-sponsor's role as activist—the strategy is to omit the possibility of legislation or professional activism, which opens the way for Patagonia to proceed with its own initiatives.

Line 3 also demonstrates a notable overlap in linguistic strategies between AS1 and AS3—the discovery of the problem by news outlets uses the term “tied” and “connected,” respectively. Side by side, the two excerpts show remarkable similarities:

AS1 paragraph III:

Nestlé, among the biggest food companies in the world, launched the investigation in December 2014, after reports from news outlets and non-governmental organisations *tied* brutal and largely unregulated working conditions to their shrimp, prawns and Purina brand pet foods. (emphasis added)

AS3 paragraph I:

For the *past three years*, Alexander Nolte and Oliver Spies, surfing buddies and co-owners of Langbrett, a German retailer with four stores that sells surf gear and outdoor apparel, have been haunted by news reports *connecting* many of the products they sell to an emerging but serious environmental threat: microfiber pollution. (emphasis added)

In both of these examples, the choice to use “tied” and “connected” serves to mitigate any insinuation of guilt or culpability—the exact nature of the “tie” and the “connection” is left ambiguous and without any sense of the power relations involved. In fact, to do otherwise would suggest that both Patagonia’s and Nestlé’s subsequent activism was a reaction rather than purely-conceived activism, which would disqualify the “activist” half of the hybridized corporate/activist persona.

This attempt to demonstrate continuing “proactive” activism is a notable discursive theme throughout all of the advertorials in this second collection. Patagonia is represented, both overtly and through implication, as possessing the intent, the knowledge, and the ability to address a social or environmental problem, but also as having begun that work well in advance.

In AS4, there are 5 different passages that make direct reference to Patagonia’s previous activity:

AS3 paragraph IV:

- a. “Guppy Friend attracted the attention of Patagonia last summer...”
- b. “Patagonia already had a relationship with Langbrett, which sells Patagonia clothing.”

AS3 paragraph V:

“Patagonia is interested in reducing microfiber pollution, based on the results of a study it commissioned at the University of California at Santa Barbara in 2015.”

AS3 paragraph VI:

“Patagonia gave Nolte and Spies financial support—a 100,000 pound (\$108,000) grant—to develop the bag and a supply chain for it.”

AS3 paragraph IX:

“So far, he and Nolte have 30,000 pre-orders for Guppy Friend, from Patagonia and other retailers he could not yet name.”

Here, these passages use simple past tense—in tandem with the article’s description of microfiber pollution using simple present—thus positioning Patagonia as having engaged the issue proactively.

Invocation of Other Actors in AS3, AS4, AS5 and AS6

In AS6, the first profile, out of four separate companies, establishes Patagonia as having the following stance on the gender wage gap mentioned in paragraph III:

California-based Patagonia, an outdoor clothing retailer known for its activism as much as its windbreakers and fleece jackets, signed the White House pledge in August. But they've *long had a tradition of catering to female employees*, says Dean Carter, vice president of human resources and shared services. Currently, the company, which has a female CEO, Rose Marcario, has more women than men on staff – 866 v 862, respectively. (emphasis added)

In this excerpt, Patagonia is positioning itself as preempting the possibility of criticism and as being on the “leading edge” of progressive company policy. In the other profiles in that same advertorial, each company was characterized not only by its pending actions on gender-wage disparity, but also on its history with that issue, just as Patagonia was in the above excerpt.

Arjuna Capital is described immediately after as having been “proactive about gender parity”; Salesforce is depicted more ambiguously with regard to the issue, with all its initiatives—including leadership training, increased number of promotions for women, and maternal/paternal leave—depicted in pluperfect tense, but supposedly in response to a “massive audit in 2015.” Of the four company profiles, Patagonia’s is the only one whose response to gender-wage disparity is not even an issue—and therefore its initiatives were the result of an activist’s agency, one that responds not out of economic necessity or the needs of public relations but out of an egalitarian sense of public interest.

In fact, the most prominent convergence between the articles’ strategies is the establishment of *prior commitment* to progressive policies and social action. In three out of the four samples, there are direct references to Patagonia’s stance *before* the issue/event under discussion came into the public eye. In AS5, the opening line establishes Patagonia directly in relation to other companies thusly: “Patagonia has just become the first retailer to pull out of a

big industry trade show in Utah to protest state leaders' efforts to strip federal protection of public land." In AS3, there are two such references, one referring to a business relationship which would speed the production of a pollutant-reducing laundry bag ("Patagonia already had a relationship with Langbrett, which sells Patagonia clothing."), and the other to a study the company commissioned in 2015 to calculate the amount of pollution their clothing generates.

In AS3, there is also a particularly telling comparison that the author uses to legitimize Patagonia's own activism (namely its commissioned studies) at the expense of others: the advertorial's discussions of "research." While the text presents other, amorphous "research" as slow and inefficient, Patagonia's own studies are shown to be in progress and unimpeded. After using the first paragraph to present microfiber pollution as an imminent ecological crisis, the article presents government regulation as a lengthy, bureaucratic process:

AS3 Paragraph I:

For the past three years, Alexander Nolte and Oliver Spies, surfing buddies and co-owners of Langbrett, a German retailer with four stores that sells surf gear and outdoor apparel, have been haunted by news reports connecting many of the products they sell to an emerging but serious environmental threat: microfiber pollution. Synthetic textiles, such as fleece jackets, send tiny plastic fibers into wastewater after washing. These bits eventually make their way into rivers, lakes and our oceans, where they pose health threats to plants and animals. The two men knew they had to act.

AS3 Paragraph III:

To date, no studies have shown that microfibers cause health problems in humans. But that's cold comfort to Nolte: "*Scientific research is slow*, so it might take another generation to find out what harm [these pollutants] will do. I don't want to wait that long." (emphasis added)

AS3 Paragraph X:

“We know that higher quality fabrics shed fewer fibers,” he says. He hopes the testing standard will make that clear to brands and consumers. But eventually it might take government regulation to curb the sale of high-shed synthetics, he says.

AS3 Paragraph XI:

But with Guppy Friend, he says: “We can act now. We do not need to wait for anyone.”

In contrast to the “slow” processes of both the scientific community and government regulation, the advertorial then presents a separate study and Patagonia’s own research as, once again, having identified and begun to preempt the crisis:

AS3 Paragraph IV:

Guppy Friend attracted the attention of Patagonia *last summer* when word about the project reached Phil Graves, managing director of Tin Shed Ventures, Patagonia’s investment fund. Patagonia *already had* a relationship with Langbrett, which sells Patagonia clothing. (emphasis added)

AS3 Paragraph V:

Patagonia is interested in reducing microfiber pollution, based on the results of a study it commissioned at the University of California at Santa Barbara in 2015. Researchers calculated the microfibers shed from Patagonia outerwear during laundry, and found that a single fleece jacket sheds as many as 250,000 synthetic fibers. Using sales numbers, the researchers extrapolated that about 100,000 jackets are in use worldwide each year, and washing them would produce enough plastic to make 11,900 grocery bags. (emphasis added)

AS3 Paragraph VI:

Patagonia gave Nolte and Spies financial support – a €100,000 (\$108,000) grant – to develop the mesh bag and a supply chain for it. The duo also launched the Kickstarter campaign that ran from last October to December and raised €28,640 (\$30,604) from 668 backers.

In this case, the construction of an identity for Patagonia is not the foremost one in the article. In the overall flow, Patagonia is presented in the middle portions of the article, in “supporting roles” for the inventors. Paragraphs IV-VI, however, establish Patagonia as a key enabler of the guppy’s production and an integral part of the issue’s history, since the possibility of government regulation or even adequate research (as opposed to those commissioned by Patagonia itself) has been sidelined in I, III, X and XI.

AS3, 4, 5 and 6 each build a temporal framework, especially through verb tense but also by direct references, by which Patagonia is pre-established as an activist, not by its intentions but by its past actions and history with the issue—in each of the three separate advertorials above, the company is constructed as having preempted standard avenues of activism through “proactive” engagement. These “devices of temporality” establish a corporate identity which seems, in its current activism, to be absolutely consistent with its character by establishing and emphasizing its history, showing that it is acting out of something like its “essence” or “institutional character” rather than economic imperatives or potential challenges from activists.

Discussion of AS3, AS4, AS5, and AS6

There were two distinct discursive themes that arose out this series of advertorials:

- 1) “Proactive” approaches to civic responsibility characterized discussions of the company’s past actions; the advertorials’ portrayal of Patagonia’s agency in a current situation relied on the creation of a precedent with that same issue.
- 2) The ability to establish a genuinely activist persona means demonstrating agency apart from economic imperatives (McDonnell 5)—thus, the advertorials sought to establish for

the subject-sponsor a prior history with the issues, so that current action may not be taken as a reaction but rather as genuine engagement with a social problem.

This latter set of advertorials demonstrated, even amidst considerable range in subject and authorship, a strangely uniform commitment to the subject-sponsor's past, much more so than in the first set of samples. This emphasis on the subject-sponsor's past provides context and legitimization to the activism being portrayed in the articles by removing the notion of reaction from its origination—*when there is an apparent precedent for a subject-sponsor's activism, it becomes much more difficult to attribute subsequent activism to self-interest only*. In fact, the ability to construct a hybridized corporate-activist identity at all seems to depend on the communication not only of socially-oriented activism, but of pure intentions also.

Conclusion

From this brief study, the samples under consideration demonstrated several key strategies in their construction of hybridized identities for their corporate subject-sponsor. First, the advertorials engaged directly with the social issue under consideration, using interviews and studies to establish the scope and weightiness of the issue itself, thus legitimizing the activism of their subject-sponsor and establishing a precedent by which motives may be attributed. Second, the samples invoked other actors, either traditional media or competitors, only selectively and in such a way to highlight the subject-sponsor's own commitment to social goals and its exception to typically "corporate" motivations. These two separate emphases, the creation of the issue and of the various actors, seemed to be at the core of these hybridized identities.

The linguistic strategies used in both recreating the issue and invoking/framing other actors also seemed to place special emphasis on the timing (and therefore agency) of events, especially regarding prior intent and the ability to demonstrate appropriate responses. This suggested that the sort of agency needed to construct an activist identity—one which acts without regard for economic imperatives—relied mainly on the successful *merging of the activist's and corporation's attitudes but not their goals*—meaning that the contradictions between human rights and externalization, industrial pollution and production, wage disparities and free-market principles are left to the side in an attempt to preserve the "union" of these two identities. In merging the identities of the corporation and the activist, these advertorials (with the exception of AS2, an attack advertorial) *seem* to accept both goals but reify only the corporate by their removal of traditional activism and their promotion of self-policing.

In the paired example (AS1 and AS2), the construction of a hybridized corporate/activist identity involved the establishment of two separate halves: the first, the corporate, was achieved

through proving the subject-sponsor's exception to typical corporate categories and behaviors, which was itself achieved through comparisons with other similar companies; the second half of this identity, the activist, was constructed mainly through the reconstruction of the social issue itself, tailoring its presentation so that it legitimized the subject-sponsor's efforts at activism depicted in the advertorial. In the set of advertorials featuring Patagonia, there was notable emphasis on timing and establishing a history with the subject, as a way not only to absolve the subject-sponsor of guilt, but also to establish it as an activist by establishing commitment to social goals prior to the time of the advertorial. It was here—on the ability to establish pure motives—that the “activist” half of the hybridized identity seemed to pivot.

Whereas the advertorial may seem like a simple attempt to build goodwill, its engagement with social issues and with relevant actors is far from politically-neutral. In every advertorial but the second, the subject-sponsor's relationship to the issue was being recast—the power relations being perpetuated in these texts are fundamentally unequal, with the press, consumer, the victim of harmful practice, and even the “villain” reduced to secondary roles. The advertorials, far from simply reporting a subject-sponsor's good deeds, are establishing a narrative of complete and uninterrupted corporate responsibility, of “self-policing” policies in which traditional activism, governmental agencies, corporate watchdogs, and the traditional press are removed from the picture.

In short, the advertorials sought to present motivations for activism apart from material gain, as McDonnell notes is typical of corporate activism in general (56); ultimately, though, the presentation of those motivations relied on the establishment, through individual linguistic strategies and broader discursive themes, of a hybridized corporate/activist identity. In order to establish “pure” agency and legitimize the subject-sponsor's own activism, the advertorials

constructed the subject-sponsor's history within the social issue as well as the subject-sponsor's response to a current event which acted as a manifestation of that issue; this profile, in turn, was constructed by the strategic framing—syntactic and otherwise—of the issue itself as well as the actors involved in it.

Chapter 4: Analysis of User Responses to Advertorials in *The Guardian UK's Sustainable Business Section*

Introduction and Methodology

This chapter focuses on reader responses to online advertorials—more precisely, the ways in which readers attribute identities in response or reaction to the personas (i.e., a socially-motivated corporate activist) discussed in chapter 3. The presentation of a hybridized corporate-activist identity is never a sure “win” because the reception—the interaction of reader and text—is itself irreducibly complex, with its own political struggles, social languages and relevant histories. The samples discussed here are by no means meant to represent a wider readership or even a typified response to advertorials, but rather to exemplify the interaction of a single news publication’s own attributed identity with the identity being proffered in a single advertorial.

The main claim presented in this chapter is this: the greatest asset of advertorials, the ethos of the host publication (Cooper and Nownes 560), can also subvert the reception of the sponsored text by offering the reader a built-in avenue for critical analysis that may invalidate the hybridized identities presented to them. As demonstrated in the following sampling of user comments of an advertorial, *when the readers saw the host newspaper as a site of discursive struggle*, meaning that they were inclined to vie for power through the negotiation of meaning (Phillips and Hardy 46), they turned their attention to the motivation behind the sponsored text rather than to the matter of its content, thus pointing to ethical contradictions and ultimately even disparaging the host publication itself.

Using techniques from conversation analysis (CA), I analyze user responses to an advertorial with an emphasis on the structured ways readers have of responding to an advertorial while also invoking the publication’s identity. Specifically, Pomerantz and Fair’s framework

(qtd. in ten Have 124) is particularly useful in this instance because it focuses on the ways the thread's structure implicates roles for different actors, specifically the ways in which roles presented in the data also invoke or implicate more permanent roles. In my own case, I use this framework to investigate (1) a reader's interaction with an advertorial and (2) the ways a host publication's attributed identities may affect that interaction.

There are, however, some methodological issues with regard to using CA to analyze online dialogue. As Giles *et al.* point out, computer-mediated communication (CMC) is so foreign to the conditions of oral speech that the differences should be elaborated in studies using CA with CMC (50). In my own data, the main differences between a user-comment section and oral speech are listed here:

1. Turns are determined by order of posts received, not by cues or structural elements. Thus, turn-taking as an iterable analytic framework is suspended (Gonzalez-Lloret 312).
2. Interaction through user comments is asynchronous. There can be and usually are long gaps between replies or "likes," so the measurement of pauses—and the implication of their length—is not comparable to the consideration of silence-measuring in real-time conversation.
3. The forum is not entirely free, but is moderated by staff member of *The Guardian*. There are "rules" or guidelines to interactions and a staff member who enforces them.
4. Rather than taking multiple turns, a commenter will often focus on the style and content as though it were a "one-off," containing all that she intends to say, and saying in such a way as to achieve her goal, in one single posting.

Additionally, during a short data session, it was pointed out to me that it was by no means clear whether the appointed addressee (indicated by an arrow in the excerpt below) was in fact the

audience of the comment. In the comment thread, the “look” is far more ambiguous than the noting of gaze direction in face-to-face conversation, for example, would be. In this sample, while L is using the thread’s first post as a precedent and offering his own response as an indicator of intersubjectivity, meaning the sharing of a perspective between interlocutors (Schiffrin 389), with regard to the analysis of the OP, he may just as easily be addressing himself to other readers in addition to JS. This problem of methodology, however, reveals a far more important point about the relationship of comment sections to the message of the advertorials: the very fact that L appears to be addressing himself to other, indeterminate readers suggests that the *comments section itself is first and foremost an interpretive artifact* for the article, used in order to change readers’ perceptions of the advertorial. Even so, while many of the typical real-time speaker actions used for data in CA are suspended in a user comment post, the actions undertaken in the thread manage to “reflect and realize [the] practical knowledge [of interlocutors]” (Schiffrin 235). Each comment relies on the previous one—with the exception of the “opening post” (OP)—to form the context it needs to make itself understood, so that, as Giles points out, the OP tends to set the topic, and respondents also tend to stay on-topic (486). In CMC, then, just as in spoken conversation, “each utterance in a sequence is shaped by a prior context [...] and provides context for the next utterance” (Schiffrin 235), so that Conversation Analysis’ fundamental idea of the *adjacency pair* (i.e., a speaking turn and the response it evokes) as the fundamental unit for the analysis of discourse can be applied to this excerpt with relatively few problems.

In the sample below, the OP establishes an “exhortation-affirmation” schema, meaning that there is a distinct precedent for the thread that is set with the first post, but this schema is subverted and the topic *redirected*, thus creating an opening for critical discussion of the

publication and its practices, in line (f) of the excerpt. It is this redirection—and the group knowledge and identities implicated in that structural shift—that is the main focus of the analysis presented herein.

The following interaction was selected from within the comments section of AS2, “Nestle admits to slavery in Thailand while fighting child labour lawsuit in Ivory Coast,” published on Feb 1 2016 and sponsored by Mondelēz International. Within a period of three days, AS2 received a total of 167 comments, and in those posts, the word “boycott” occurred 16 times. I chose this specific comment thread, formed over a period of 15+ hours, based on its references to *The Guardian*, to Nestlé, and to a broader movement (“Nestlé boycott”) by which participants judge group membership and practices. Basically, the excerpt that appears below does both, “reflect[s] and realize[s] [the] practical knowledge” of the speakers (Schiffrin 235), especially with regard to the role of a publication’s identity in user response to advertorials. There are four interlocutors, or users, featured in this sequence: Jonathan Stromberg (JS), who initiated the post; sablemouse (S), who posts a reply to JS and later to M; Lynx2013 (L), who responds to JS; and menaidave (M), who responds to L. What begins as a discussion of the Nestle boycott (which exists outside the newspaper) becomes a negotiation of *The Guardian*’s own identity.

It is worth noting here that the users in this excerpt seem to have misinterpreted the aims and emphasis of advertorial 2 (see chapter 3), namely in that they do not acknowledge the article’s attempts to disparage Nestlé, mistaking it for a “whitewash” of the company. In fact, that this advertorial included a comments section at all may have been an attempt to attract vitriol from users. Even so, the topic redirection in line (f) suggests an awareness of *The Guardian*’s status as a site of discursive struggle, and therefore in the potential for myriad and potentially-

conflicting identities being implemented, namely that of “citizen activist” and “corporate interest.” This same awareness of discursive struggle seemed to form the basis of the users’ identity attribution, both to the subject of the advertorial (Nestlé) and *The Guardian* itself; their analysis of the conflicts seemed to pivot on these same identities. It was this conflict, ultimately, that provided the “local knowledge” used in the disqualification of the advertorial.

Comment Thread 1 (CT1) From *The Guardian Online*

- JS: (a) If you haven’t heard of the Nestle boycott, look it up now! Lobbying in poor
 (b) countries to enable itself to aggressively promote milk powder has led to a
 (c) significant cut in breastfeeding rates in some of theses countries where it can be a
 (d) matter of life and death for babies. Profit before lives.
- S→JS: (e) ^^^^^^^
- L→JS: (f) We all have heard of the Nestle boycott. All of us except for the Guardian.
- M→L: (g) Or the Guardian is giving it more ammo.
- S→M: (h) with this? they’re all but praising them. this site has become a corporate
 (i) mouthpiece with the odd bit of criticism as alibi.

The thread begins by referencing a widespread reaction to Nestlé’s marketing infant formula in third-world countries during the 1970s, following which formula was mistakenly and consistently taken as a substitute for breast milk—and soon after which, Nestlé found itself in the middle of a “well-organized boycott campaign” (Boyd 283). In JS’s post, though, the timing of

Nestlé's marketing activities is presented as a basis for ongoing resistance by conscientious consumers.

JS begins the thread with a three-sentence post, one that gives an invitation to a boycott, gives substantiation for the boycott, and then summarizes the opposing stance using intermediate voice, respectively. In line (a), the invitation is in the imperative mood and addresses the reader directly, using "you" as well as an exclamation mark. The OP initiates the thread with an exhortation, urging readers to join in consumer activism, creating a proposed schema for the entire thread, an "*exhortation-affirmation*" structure. That this first post may be taken as an "exhortation" is solidified by S's first response in line (e), a graphic representation of "ditto to previous post." In an "exhortation-affirmation" schema, JS's post does not lend itself to any response other than affirmation or direct negation; it is a "call to action," fit only to be ignored, affirmed, or contradicted, since users tend to stay on-topic with such threads (Giles 486). This specific schema ("exhortation-affirmation") proceeds for only another line, up until (f), before it is eventually redirected even as it is being replicated.

To all appearances, JS is addressing himself to all readers of the article. This invitation to join the boycott movement, however, is presented not as a proposed action, but a gaining (and assumed acceptance) of knowledge—the reader is invited not simply to "boycott Nestlé," but to "look it up," essentially to inform themselves about the issue in an ambiguously-prescribed avenue. In the OP's syntax, treated here as the product of deliberate choice (Schiffrin 237), there is a notable shift between the first, second and third sentences of the OP; while there is no subordination in JS's third sentence in line (d) and only an introductory adverbial clause in the first sentence, in line (a), the second sentence uses nominalization in both its subject and object slot, a slip into "academic" English, perhaps in an effort to gain credibility. In the last sentence of

his post, JS uses intermediate voice to adopt the stance of the company. All in all, his syntax seems to indicate a single stance, providing no avenue for response other than a simple “yes” (what I here call “affirmation”) or “no.”

The OP does not address the advertorial directly; it does not call into question its motives, authorship, or funding, choosing instead to use the content as a platform for a call to action. As such, the OP establishes the “in-group” by promoting solidarity (a) and offering something like a slogan (d), so that the identities proffered in the OP are arranged in terms of their specific roles within activism: these include the consumer (a), Nestlé, and the victims of the company’s practices. Given JS’s comparatively lengthy attempt at justifying the boycott, the consumer is meant to ally herself with the victims against the company.

In line (f), L’s response to the OP, existing as next-position in the adjacency pair, does two distinct things: it aligns itself with the “exhortation-affirmation” schema by declaring the interlocutors’ collectivity (through the use of the first-person plural pronoun) and attributing to it an awareness of the boycott; and it redirects the topic from the advertorial’s content to *The Guardian* itself. (Given the restrictions of the medium, it is not immediately clear whether or not L *meant* his post to redirect the thread, but I continue to refer to this event as topic redirection since each subsequent post addresses itself to (f), not to the OP.) The syntax of this post is arranged as two short sentences, but with specific strategies of repetition that place emphasis on the last line: the verb tense (pluperfect) is the same for both sentences, so that the second sentence, itself a fragment, could have been embedded within the subject slot of the first sentence. It is also in this second sentence of the post that L enacts what Sacks (cited in Schifffrin 261) calls “stepwise topic transitions,” the discursive strategy of introducing a new topic while addressing the previous one: “We all have heard of the Nestle boycott. All of us except for the

Guardian.” While L continues to discuss the boycott, his invocation of the publication in line (f) represents a turning point in the thread; after this point, both M and S address themselves to *The Guardian*’s role in citizen activism, not to the boycott or to Nestlé: M gives an explanation for the apparent silence of the publication on the issue, attempting to reconcile the contradiction L points out in (f); S, in the closing comment of the thread, disparages the publication by equating it with “corporate” interests entirely, also commenting on the paper’s need to pander to its reader-base.

L’s subversion—perhaps unwitting—of the “exhortation-affirmation” structure initiated by JS suggests that L’s invocation of *The Guardian* does not portray it as a neutral third party, but as a member of the “in-group” which is also shirking its responsibility within this group. Whereas the OP promotes solidarity among specifically-informed readers, L’s successful attempt at topic redirection (see line “f”) problematizes the construction of the “in-group” (and thus the ability of the advertorial to exist “safely” within the publication), first by introducing *The Guardian* itself as an actor within the OP’s call to citizen activism, and secondly by questioning the loyalty of *The Guardian* to that same cause, thus insinuating an ideological rift between the “in-group” and the host publication.

This occurrence of topic redirection in (f) addresses a communicative problem which lies not only in the structure of the thread itself, but in the users’ understanding of the medium itself and the economies of knowledge it is subject to: *how should readers respond to apparent contradictions in the attributed identities of the publication and the advertorial it hosts?* The topic redirection in (f), which also invokes *The Guardian* as a subject, introduces an idea which permeates the rest of the thread: that the newspaper itself is a site of discursive struggle subject to multiple and even suspect voices all vying for the ability to make meaning (vying for power).

Once this possibility was presented, the contradictions became a subject of reflection themselves, so that the credibility of the publication, the vehicle for the article's message (Cameron and Curtin 178), is also suspended.

Analysis: The Role of *The Guardian*'s Identity in an Economy of Knowledge

The analysis below focuses on an instance of topic redirection (f) in which the identity of *The Guardian* is invoked during a discussion of citizen activism. It is this site of intersubjectivity, then, which affords a unique insight to the dynamic between the identities constructed in the advertorials and the identities of their host publications. By introducing the publication's own stance, the conversation is turned from social activism to a critical discussion of *The Guardian* itself. In the comment thread, this invocation of the publication's identity had significant implications for the response to the article itself, namely that it provided a platform for critical discussion by its emphasis on contradictions between the publication and business interests in general.

In Schiffrin's *Approaches to Discourse*, she explains that the "next position" (meaning a response to a prior utterance, in this case the OP) "is a crucial location for the building of intersubjectivity" since it "offers an opportunity to reveal aspects of the understanding of prior talk to which own talk will be addressed" (237). L's redirection of the topic—essentially, the inclusion of a news publication into a discussion of citizen activism—suggests that contradictions between stance and content were themselves highly-salient issues among the users and were not easily resolvable, with responses ranging from rejection of the publication itself in line (h) to exhibiting trust in the goodwill of the publication in line (g).

The most notable identity implicated, the one introduced in the instance of topic redirection, is that of *The Guardian* itself. It was also the invocation of this particular identity (not in its similarity or its dissimilarity to any of the previously-invoked ones, but in its very separateness as an entity) that facilitated the subsequent discussion of *the publication's connection to the content itself*. The role of the paper is of a broker of knowledge, which in the economy of public action is hugely important; the role of the consumer is implicated as ideological; the role of the victim is equated with the consumer; the role of the paper is conspicuously left out of the OP, and in L's response receives special emphasis. By implicating two separate identities (the "we" of the OP and *The Guardian*), the topic redirection draws attention to the contradictions in the production of the text itself. The privileging of knowledge and an emphasis on the economies of knowledge (with a keen awareness of message hegemony) also places *The Guardian* in the unfortunate position—in terms of its *attributed* identity—of being seen as a broker of corporate discourse at the same time it must maintain its apparent allegiance to the values of citizen activists. These users were highly aware of the political nature of knowledge and the role mechanisms of dissemination play in political struggle. To these users, knowledge itself—who has it, how it is disseminated, who is disseminating it—is itself highly political, *and therefore the publication itself is, rather than a single voice, a site of discursive struggle, with multiple and potentially contradictory identities implicated*. It was this attribution of separate identities that directed the rest of the conversation, the topic having been redirected in line (f).

This critical awareness was predicated on a belief in the primacy of collective action—based on "exhortation-affirmation" schema, they view themselves as a "polity," and therefore invoke the narrative of "human vs. profit," thus establishing their own position as polity-based,

and thus as democratic. In essence, these users see themselves as opposing a hegemony—the business lobby.

Ultimately, the initial direction of the OP is redirected over several comments until it ceases to address either belief or history, and instead analyzes the economy of knowledge that they are experiencing in the thread—meaning, they are analyzing the political content of knowledge and even the means through which knowledge is offered. To S, L, and M, simply stating the narrative, as the OP does, is not enough—to these same users, it is more vital that the message be disseminated, since systems of knowledge are themselves at war; and anyone hearing these proper channels (of which *The Guardian* is expected to be one) would thus be convinced. A *belief in the primacy of group action* also situates the Guardian, in an ideal situation, as a “herald” of that group action. To S, L and M, to have access to knowledge isn’t the point—within this conversation, there is an entire praxis present here which emphasizes group action/activism that also necessitates the ability to spread knowledge of a specific type. It is this role that they seem to suggest the Guardian should fill—and this role is fundamentally at odds with the publication’s slow acclimation to advertorials and articles featuring business interests.

What, then, was the interaction of the newspaper’s attributed identity with that of the advertorial? *The introduction of the publication’s identity to a discussion of the advertorial seemed to indicate an increase in awareness of discursive struggle, which in turn offered an avenue for critical analysis of the publication and of the advertorial’s stance in it. Where this critical awareness is, the advertorial’s aims are jeopardized, since the ability of the advertorial to build trust is diminished.* The interaction of the newspaper’s own identity with the subject-sponsor’s, then, provided the basis for conflict between their respective roles. The very notion of

received identities, whether of the newspaper or the identities being constructed in the articles themselves, seemed to play an integral role in the readers' processing of the content.

Discussion

There were 4 main themes that emerged from the results:

- 1) *The identity attributed to the host publication was shown to exist in close relation with the identities presented in the advertorials; thus, the advertorial may invalidate the credibility of the publication for that moment, at which point the identity presented in the advertorial will also be made less-credible.*
- 2) *The presentation of native content is not a matter of mimicking tone only, but a complex and often-political interaction between readers, the publication, and the advertorial. In the above examples, the categories that advertorials seek to renegotiate (the dichotomy between corporate and social activist) remain substantial barriers to the acceptance of their message. Ultimately, the stance of the publication was an interpretive lens by which the sponsor-subject's attempt at identity hybridization may be invalidated altogether.*
- 3) *Once the identity of The Guardian was invoked, these four users tended to see the publication as a site of political struggle with multiple voices present, not as a single voice which may "hide" other third-parties. The users clearly became keenly aware of contradictions and were quick to come to conclusions about those contradictions. The reader's interaction with the publication's stance was such that contradictions were resolved not by grouping the advertorial's identities in with the host publications, but by invalidating the host publication's altogether. This presents some real problems for the theoretical underpinnings of native content itself—if publications are also seen as sites of discursive struggle by its users (essentially, if the users are politically-aware to one degree or another), then the ability of an advertorial to hybridize the corporate and activist is considerably diminished. Thus, publications with a marked political stance,*

while containing valuable audiences, are much more likely to evoke negative reactions if the subject-sponsors are “historical enemies” of that stance, since the users are also much more likely to view particular media outlets as sites of discursive struggle.

- 4) *In line “e,” L’s analysis of the OP (and subsequent discussion reorientation) suggested that the “practical knowledge” of this group was based in an awareness of discursive struggle and of the political nature of publishing (topic selection, specifically).*

The thread’s abrupt reorientation to the economy of knowledge surrounding the article and publication (rather than just the article’s content) suggested that users were keenly aware of (1) the political nature of publishing (specifically topic selection) and (2) the status of the publication and article themselves as sites of discursive struggle. This group knowledge reflected and renewed (Schiffrin 235) in the excerpt seemed to manifest itself most strongly not in discussions of consumer choice or even citizen activism—as JS had exhorted the users—*but in the act of critique itself*, specifically of the critique of media practices and favoritism. The identity of *The Guardian*, once introduced into the conversation in line (f), became a means for critical analysis not only of the advertorial itself but also the host publication. *This suggests that the potential loss of a paper’s credibility* (where disclosure is *not* a result of a banner or label identifying the article as an advertorial) *discussed in the literature* (e.g., Cameron and Curtin) *is based in the conflict of attributed identities*—in this sample, the more concrete identities the “consumer-activist” and the “corporate interest” were used to form these distinctions, but the contradictions that arose in the conversation were based in the negotiation of group identities and the “purity” of actions.

The subversion in line (f) of the “exhortation-affirmation” schema established in the OP suggested that the contradictions between the publication’s stance and their relationship with

sponsors were especially salient issues among the users—in lines (f) through (i), *The Guardian* was seen not as having to negotiate ideological allegiances with economic imperatives, but as a singular entity with a singular role to play. The users' reaction to AS2 (see table 3.1) were largely categorical, meaning that business interests or a “corporate mouthpiece” are derivative of a separate universe than social activism. These responses seem virulently opposed to the notion that Nestlé—or indeed any multinational—could fulfill the role of social activist, but these interactions of readers with the text (and especially other readers) stand to illuminate the ways in which attribution of identities by readers affect the reception of the message itself.

That an advertorial must address the discourse conventions of its host medium is not controversial; however, I argue that the mechanisms by which readers respond to the advertorial is not a matter of the paper's history or choosing but of the host publication's stance, which informs a reader's response and is itself a matter of interpretation. Moreover, this interpretation is created through establishing group membership (essentially, the attribution of identities), a process that includes the publication itself, leaving the host publication no recourse to unilaterally articulate its own stance. My own conclusions would seem to corroborate that of Cooper and Nowne's, who found that readers who were more trusting of the host publication tended to respond more favorably to advertorials in that publication (563); I suggest, though, that this dynamic may be better understood by studying the ways identities of the publication itself are implemented, especially in regard to political stance and previous coverage. In this sample, the readers' critical responses to the advertorial were based not in its content, but in perceived conflicts between the identity of the host publication and the identity being presented in the text. However, the interaction of an advertorial's constructed identities with the host's was shown to be much more complex and problematic among readers to whom the newspaper was a site of

discursive struggle. *The invocation of a paper's own attributed identity is a means by which an advertorial's proffered identities may be invalidated, since this interaction may constitute conflicts of interest and the viewing of the newspaper as a site of discursive struggle.*

Since the host publication's identity itself makes a space for a reader's analysis, this is yet another argument for the efficacy (from the point of view of the subject-sponsor) of using the "newsfeed" and similar platforms to share articles. Moving the host publication's website to a secondary role in the reading process and also presenting the article to readers without an "insider's" knowledge of the publication's stance and attitudes would also seem to be means for lessening of critical awareness and an increasing reader openness to the message.

Epilogue

This study has demonstrated that advertorials are being used in the construction of a hybridized activist-corporate identity. By situating their subject-sponsor in time and in relation to other companies and activists, such advertorials establish a pure-intentioned agency, and thus garner legitimacy for it. As a result, these texts also absolve the sponsors of blame for malefactions and remove traditional activism from the picture to legitimize their own efforts at activism. As demonstrated in chapter 4, the ability to analyze critically the content of an advertorial is largely based in an awareness of the host publication's own identity, so the increasing number of and types of platforms (websites, especially) stand to de-contextualize this relationship and thereby undermine the ability of readers to respond critically.

The shift online now means that to have “control” of a message implies a huge amount of influence, so that even large corporations cannot guarantee control of their own image. There are so many outlets and websites now that single advertorials are likely to be overlooked, so even to launch an advertorial campaign with a single publication is no guarantee that the subject-sponsor's message will have enough force behind it. In response to the multiplicity facing all forms of corporate discourse, the advertorial presents a unique strategy: the ability to control the responses of individual readers through the production of a recognizable activist identity, something that builds identity-based trust between the sponsor and reader and ultimately exerts a normative control over that reader's response.

Whether intentional or not, the strategies used to construct hybridized identities in image advertorials offer a critical insight into linguistic identity construction itself—*where the constituent parts of a hybridized identity represent unequal power relations, the more powerful part may much more easily come to control (through such cost-prohibitive means as publishing*

advertorials in the mainstream press) the meanings and legitimacies of the other. In my data, the advertorials' attempt to construct a corporate-social activist involved the use of appropriate social languages (Gee 45) and interviews with "people-on-the-ground", but in the process of reconciling the two parts, the advertorials also sidelined and delegitimized the roles of other activists. The more serious implications of this specific instance of identity hybridization, though, only become clear once they are considered together with the publishing practices. Since these texts inhabit the same space (i.e., share the same newspapers and discourse practices) as investigative journalism, together, they may well constitute the bulk of a reader's experience with social activism. These two separate interests, social activism and corporate interests, are laying claim in their respective texts to the same goods and social legitimacy, but in the case of advertorials, the activists themselves are being strategically removed from the picture. As the practice of publishing advertorials continues to expand, the vision of activism and social order being created in corporate-sponsored advertorials is increasingly likely to influence the practices of activism itself (i.e., who is allowed to engage in it, what sorts of work it does, what activists take as their object whether state or corporate abuses, how they communicate findings, what recourse they choose to enact their will whether litigation or appeals to the public through the press, what issues are worthy of attention) as well as renegotiate the narratives that dictate who may be called an "activist," what sort of work is called "activist," and the line between public perceptions of "business interests" and "public interests." As a combined result of the linguistic strategies represented in my data and the continuing expansion of advertorial publishing, "activism-in-the-public-interest" is now in direct competition with "activism-for-private-interests" for the kinds of social legitimacy traditionally reserved for charities and non-government organizations.

If activism is itself a matter of “identification work,” meaning that performances must be recognized as legitimate (Gee 54) by those involved or by the public, then the redirection and redefinition of the term “activist” also has a direct effect on public response to a negative disclosure—it is a gradual self-immunization by private interests against public outrage. It is in this regard that the formation of a hybridized corporate-activist identity constitutes a form of normative control; when the basis for a negative public response is firmly based in the conventional identities of the “activist,” a combination of “acting-interacting-thinking-valuing-talking” (Gee 51), and when this identity is renegotiated discursively, the public response, also discursive, follows suit. I would argue that influencing the public’s response to disclosures—or rather the lack of it—is the object of developing discursive mechanisms for identity hybridization, but, as discussed above, the *effects* of the same practice are potentially even more serious, and journalists as well as scholars would do well to keep this in mind as the practice continues to develop.

Directions for Future Research:

Where the development of ways of querying responses and uses of advertorials may be prime for examination is on social media. The examination of these phenomena in social media was beyond the scope of this study. Specifically, more detailed investigations into the role of the “newsfeed” in news consumption is, I would argue, a crucial next step in research of advertorials and media studies in general. Since most news consumption in the U.S. is facilitated through social media (Gottfried and Shearer 2), the potential for message framing and dissemination as well as issues of visibility and credibility are potentially being affected by recent changes in the

technological platforms—these areas are a pressing concern for media studies, writing studies, and rhetoric studies, to name but a few fields with direct connections to discourse studies.

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Appendix A - AS1

Associated Press. “Nestlé admits to forced labour in its seafood supply chain in Thailand.” *The Guardian UK*. Guardian News and Media, 24 Nov. 2015. Web. 5 Sep. 2016.

Subtitle: In a move praised by anti-slavery groups, global food giant reports abuse of migrant labour among its suppliers in Thai seafood industry, after investigation.

Impoverished migrant workers in Thailand are sold or lured by false promises and forced to catch and process fish that ends up in global food giant Nestlé’s supply chains.

The unusual disclosure comes from Geneva-based Nestlé itself, which in an act of self-policing announced the conclusions of its year-long internal investigation on Monday. The study found virtually all US and European companies buying seafood from Thailand are exposed to the same risks of abuse in their supply chains.

Nestlé, among the biggest food companies in the world, launched the investigation in December 2014, after reports from news outlets and non-governmental organisations tied brutal and largely unregulated working conditions to their shrimp, prawns and Purina brand pet foods.

The labourers come from Thailand’s much poorer neighbours Myanmar and Cambodia. Brokers illegally charge them fees to get jobs, trapping them into working on fishing vessels and at ports, mills and seafood farms in Thailand to pay back more money than they can ever earn.

“Sometimes, the net is too heavy and workers get pulled into the water and just disappear. When someone dies, he gets thrown into the water,” one Burmese worker told the non-profit organisation Verité in a report commissioned by Nestlé. “I have been working on this boat for 10 years. I have no savings. I am barely surviving,” said another. “Life is very difficult here.”

Nestlé said it would post the reports online as well as a detailed year-long solution strategy throughout 2016 as part of efforts to protect workers. It has promised to impose new requirements on all potential suppliers and train boat owners and captains about human rights, possibly with a demonstration vessel and rewards for altering their practices. It also plans to bring in outside auditors and assign a high-level Nestlé manager to make sure change is under way.

“As we’ve said consistently, forced labour and human rights abuses have no place in our supply chain,” Magdi Batato, Nestlé’s executive vice-president in charge of operations, said in a written statement. “Nestlé believes that by working with suppliers we can make a positive difference to the sourcing of ingredients.”

Nestlé is not a major purchaser of seafood in south-east Asia but does some business in Thailand, primarily for its Purina brand Fancy Feast cat food.

For its study (pdf), Verité interviewed more than 100 people, including about 80 workers from Myanmar and Cambodia, as well as boat owners, shrimp farm owners, site supervisors and

representatives of Nestlé's suppliers. It visited fishing ports and fishmeal packing plants, shrimp farms and docked fishing boats, all in Thailand.

Boat captains and managers, along with workers, confirmed violence and danger in the Thai seafood sector, a booming industry that exports \$7bn worth of products a year, although managers said workers sometimes got hurt because they were drunk and fighting. Boat captains rarely checked ages of workers, and Verité found underage workers forced to fish. Workers said they labour without rest, their food and water are minimal, outside contact is cut off, and they are given fake identities to hide that they are working illegally.

Generally, the workers studied by Verité were catching and processing fish into fishmeal fed to shrimp and prawns. But the Amherst, Massachusetts-based group said many of the problems it observed are systemic and not unique to Nestlé; migrant workers throughout Thailand's seafood sector are vulnerable to abuses as they are recruited, hired and employed, said Verité.

Monday's disclosure is rare. While multinational companies in industries from garments to electronics say they investigate allegations of abuse in their supply chains, they rarely share negative findings.

"It's unusual and exemplary," said Mark Lagon, president of the non-profit Freedom House, a Washington-based anti-trafficking organisation. "The propensity of the PR and legal departments of companies is not to 'fess up, not to even say they are carefully looking into a problem for fear that they will get hit with lawsuits."

In fact, Nestlé is already being sued. In August, pet food buyers filed a class-action lawsuit alleging Fancy Feast cat food was the product of slave labour associated with Thai Union Frozen Products, a major distributor. It's one of several lawsuits filed in recent months against major US retailers importing seafood from Thailand.

Some of the litigation cites the reports from AP, which tracked slave-caught fish to the supply chains of giant food sellers, such as Walmart, Sysco and Kroger, and popular brands of canned pet food, such as Fancy Feast, Meow Mix and Iams. It can turn up as calamari at fine restaurants, as imitation crab in a sushi roll or as packages of frozen snapper relabelled with store brands that land on dinner tables. The US companies have all said they strongly condemn labour abuse and are taking steps to prevent it.

Nestlé promises to publicly report its progress each year.

Appendix B - AS2

Kelly, Annie. "Nestlé admits slavery in Thailand while fighting child labour lawsuit in Ivory Coast." *The Guardian UK*. Guardian News and Media, 1 Feb. 2016. Web. 12 Sep 2016.

Subtitle: The company has won plaudits for its admission of forced labour in the Thai seafood industry but much of the supply chain remains hidden.

It's hard to think of an issue that you would less like your company to be associated with than modern slavery. Yet last November Nestlé, the world's largest foodmaker and one of the most recognisable household brands, went public with the news it had found forced labour in its supply chains in Thailand and that its customers were buying products tainted with the blood and sweat of poor, unpaid and abused migrant workers.

By independently disclosing that Nestlé customers had unwittingly bought products contaminated by the very worst labour abuses, the company said it was moving into a new era of self-policing of its own supply chains. A year-long investigation by the company confirmed media reports that the seafood industry in Thailand is riddled with forced labour and human trafficking and that slave labour was involved in the production of its Fancy Feast catfood brand.

Nestlé also made sure to make it clear that no other company sourcing seafood from Thailand, the world's third-largest seafood exporter, could have avoided being exposed to the same risks.

"As we've said consistently, forced labour and human rights abuses have no place in our supply chain," said Magdi Batato, Nestlé's executive vice-president in charge of operations, in a written statement. "Nestlé believes that by working with suppliers we can make a positive difference to the sourcing of ingredients."

The disclosure was considered by many to be ground-breaking. Nick Grono, the chief executive of NGO the Freedom Fund, which has invested heavily in anti-trafficking initiatives in Thailand, believes Nestlé's admission could be a considerable force in shifting the parameters of what can be expected of businesses when it comes to supply chain accountability.

"Nestlé's decision to conduct this investigation is to be applauded," he says. "If you've got one of the biggest brands in the world proactively coming out and admitting that they have found slavery in their business operations, then it's potentially a huge game-changer and could lead to real and sustained change in how supply chains are managed."

The research (pdf) for Nestlé's report was conducted by US corporate accountability business Verité, which works closely with organisations trying to help improve their supply chain transparency.

Last year Verité was involved in another exercise in self-disclosure by outdoor clothing company Patagonia, which announced that it had discovered several points in its supply chain in Taiwan where forced labour and unethical recruitment practices were flourishing.

Verite's chief executive, Dan Viederman, said: "In the last six months Verité has been involved in two high-profile disclosures from major brands and one of the most important lessons for us to recognise is that in neither case did the companies suffer greatly in terms of being associated with these labour conditions. Instead, they received some credit [for] being bold enough to be associated with this."

"I really hope that the recent examples help mobilise companies to be bolder and investigate more deeply because soon the reputational damage in not doing so could be considerable"

For Viederman, the biggest issue is working out how to manage the disclosures into actual change for vulnerable people trapped at the bottom of global commodity chains.

There is also a growing legal imperative for many large multinationals to start seriously engaging with labour abuses in their business operations. Legislation in both the US and the UK requires larger companies to publish annual reports on their efforts to keep their businesses slavery-free.

The success of the 2010 California Transparency in Supply Chains Act has been patchy but it has spawned a series of civil litigation suits, with consumers or workers using the legislation to launch legal actions against companies they accuse of making misleading public statements on their anti-slavery efforts.

Nestlé is one of the companies facing legal action in the US. Last week the company, along with Cargill and Archer Daniels Midland, failed in its bid to get the US Supreme Court to throw out a lawsuit seeking to hold them liable for the alleged use of child slaves in cocoa farming in the Ivory Coast.

This puts the company in the unfortunate position of disclosing slavery in one part of its operations, while at the same time fighting through the courts to fend off accusations that it exists in another – more profitable – part of its business.

By the time Nestlé owned up to slavery in the Thai seafood industry it was accepted knowledge.

Andrew Wallis, chief executive of Unseen UK, an anti-trafficking charity advocating for more supply chain accountability, said: "For me there is a big issue with one part of Nestlé saying, 'OK we have been dragged along with everyone else to face the issue of slavery in Thailand and so let's take the initiative and do something about it', and at the same time fighting tooth and nail through the courts to avoid charges of child slavery in its core operations in the Ivory Coast."

He argues that Nestlé's self-reporting could also be seen as a tactic to head off or deflate other pending civil litigation suits.

"It's easy to own up to something that has already been uncovered," he says. "By the time Nestlé owned up to slavery in the Thai seafood industry it was accepted knowledge. It'll be a brave new world when companies are actually doing the real investigation to probe into part of their supply chains that have remained outside the public domain."

“We need to move into a space where we say, ‘We’re all guilty; let’s get past that to a place where we can properly address the problem’ – and I don’t think we’re there yet.”

Appendix C – Sponsorship Banner in AS2

“Nestle admits slavery in Thailand while fighting child labour lawsuit in ivory coast.” Guardian News and Media, 2016. Author’s screenshot. Iphone.



Appendix D – AS3

O'Connor, Mary Catherine. "Microfibers are polluting our food chain. This laundry bag can stop that." *The Guardian UK*. Guardian News and Media, 12 Feb. 2017. Web. 8 March 2017.

Subtitle: Two German inventors created a laundry bag to prevent shedding microfibers ending up in oceans. Now, Patagonia will start selling it to customers.

For the past three years, Alexander Nolte and Oliver Spies, surfing buddies and co-owners of Langbrett, a German retailer with four stores that sells surf gear and outdoor apparel, have been haunted by news reports connecting many of the products they sell to an emerging but serious environmental threat: microfiber pollution. Synthetic textiles, such as fleece jackets, send tiny plastic fibers into wastewater after washing. These bits eventually make their way into rivers, lakes and our oceans, where they pose health threats to plants and animals. The two men knew they had to act.

"We said, 'either we have to stop selling fleece [apparel] or we have to think of a solution'," explains Nolte. "So we went out to our beer garden and said 'what can we do?'"

The beer-filled brainstorming session eventually led to Guppy Friend, a mesh laundry bag, that goes into the washing machine. The bag captures shedding fibers as clothes are tossed and spun, preventing the fibers from escaping. It's roomy enough for a couple of fleece jackets or other apparel made of synthetic fabric. In two weeks, Langbrett, in partnership with outdoor clothing company Patagonia, will start shipping the Guppy Friend to the backers of their Kickstarter campaign. Patagonia will then begin selling the bag to customers.

The Guppy Friend is the first device designed and marketed specifically to prevent microfiber pollution. Microfibers are tiny, so they can easily move through sewage treatment plants. Natural fibers, such as cotton or wool, biodegrade over time. But synthetic fibers are problematic because they do not biodegrade, and tend to bind with molecules of harmful chemical pollutants found in wastewater, such as pesticides or flame retardants. Plus, fibers from apparel are often coated with chemicals to achieve performance attributes such as water resistance. Studies have shown health problems among plankton and other small organisms that eat microfibers, which then make their way up the food chain. Researchers have found high numbers of fibers inside fish and shellfish sold at markets.

To date, no studies have shown that microfibers cause health problems in humans. But that's cold comfort to Nolte: "Scientific research is slow, so it might take another generation to find out what harm [these pollutants] will do. I don't want to wait that long."

Nolte and Spies worked with German research institute Fraunhofer to test and vet the bag's design and material. They settled on polyamide, also known as nylon, that doesn't shed fibers easily. It's made with a 50-micron mesh, a width that allows soapy water to enter the bag without allowing fibers to leave. When the bag is removed from the washer at the end of a cycle, the fiber – visible against the white mesh – can be removed by hand and disposed of. Tests show that the bag remains functional and intact after hundreds of washings.

The duo isn't alone in tackling the problem in the laundry room. A startup called the Rozalia Project is developing a microfiber-catching device, but it is not yet available. Devices called after-market filters are already available – these are designed to reduce the amount of lint that enters septic systems. But unless you have some plumbing skills, hiring a plumber to install the \$130 filters can be expensive.

Guppy Friend attracted the attention of Patagonia last summer when word about the project reached Phil Graves, managing director of Tin Shed Ventures, Patagonia's investment fund. Patagonia already had a relationship with Langbrett, which sells Patagonia clothing.

Patagonia is interested in reducing microfiber pollution, based on the results of a study it commissioned at the University of California at Santa Barbara in 2015. Researchers calculated the microfibers shed from Patagonia outerwear during laundry, and found that a single fleece jacket sheds as many as 250,000 synthetic fibers. Using sales numbers, the researchers extrapolated that about 100,000 jackets are in use worldwide each year, and washing them would produce enough plastic to make 11,900 grocery bags.

“We received early prototypes [of the bag] and tested them with the UCSB researchers we had worked with on our fiber loss study. They confirmed that the bag trapped anywhere from 90-95% of fibers,” Graves says. “We brought in our material engineers and gave [Nolte and Spies] feedback on construction.” Nolte says design improvements have boosted the bag's ability to capture fibers to 99%.

Patagonia gave Nolte and Spies financial support – a €100,000 (\$108,000) grant – to develop the mesh bag and a supply chain for it. The duo also launched the Kickstarter campaign that ran from last October to December and raised €28,640 (\$30,604) from 668 backers.

In exchange for the grant, Nolte and Spies agreed to let Patagonia be the first retailer, aside from Langbrett, to sell Guppy Friend.

Patagonia plans to sell Guppy Friend at the cost of buying and shipping it from Nolte and Spies – the California company won't be making a profit. It hasn't settled on a retail price yet, but it will likely be between \$20-\$30.

Since sales of synthetic fabric are growing, Guppy Friend will need to be a big seller to make a dent in microfiber pollution. So how likely is that?

When the bag is removed from the washer at the end of a cycle, the fiber – visible against the white mesh – can be removed by hand and disposed of. Tests show that the bag remains functional and intact after hundreds of washings. Photograph: Guppy Friend

It will require some convincing. Nik Sawe, a Stanford University researcher who uses neuroscience to study how consumers make decisions on environmental issues, says the key is to use emotion to influence behavior.

“If Guppy Friend can appeal to consumers’ feelings around the negative impacts of microfiber pollution, it might be able to elicit them to spend \$20 or \$30 for the bag,” he says.

In the meantime, Nolte says he’s gotten a lot of interest from retailers. So far, he and Nolte have 30,000 pre-orders for Guppy Friend, from Patagonia and other retailers he could not yet name.

Next up: Nolte and Spies are also working on reducing microfiber losses before the fabric reaches the laundry room. They are working with Deutsche Textilforschungszentrum, a German standards body, to create a metric that will show the rate/amount of fiber losses of a given textile. They hope clothing designers will choose fabrics that aren’t prone to shedding.

“We know that higher quality fabrics shed fewer fibers,” he says. He hopes the testing standard will make that clear to brands and consumers. But eventually it might take government regulation to curb the sale of high-shed synthetics, he says.

But with Guppy Friend, he says: “We can act now. We do not need to wait for anyone.”

Appendix E – AS4

O'Connor, Mary Catherine. "Patagonia, Black Diamond take on Utah officials over public land rights." *The Guardian UK*. Guardian News and Media, 14 Jan. 2017. Web. 8 March 2017.

Subtitle: The outdoor industry is leading the fight to protect America's public lands from being developed for gas and oil

Utah, a state rich in epic landscapes and national parks, is becoming ground zero for a fight between the \$646bn outdoor industry and state lawmakers over public land management.

At a trade show for outdoor clothing and gear makers in Salt Lake City this week, two prominent figures from the industry called on their peers to move the semi-annual event out of the state unless Utah leaders stop supporting efforts by Republicans in Congress to transfer or sell federal land to states. Utah governor Gary Herbert was also called out for challenging a federal law that allowed President Obama to create the new, 1.4m-acre Bears Ears National Monument in southeast Utah last month.

"Utah's political leadership has unleashed an all-out assault against Utah's protected public lands and Utah's newest monument," wrote Peter Metcalf, a long time Utah resident who founded climbing and ski gear maker Black Diamond, in an opinion piece published in the Salt Lake Tribune on Tuesday to coincide with the start of the trade show. He noted that the trade show brings more than \$40m to the city in direct spending each year, while the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) estimates the figure can reach \$80m annually.

The next day, Yvon Chouinard, founder of clothier Patagonia, said in an open letter to Herbert that the company will no longer attend the trade show unless the governor "wants our business – and that he supports thousands of his constituents of all political persuasions who work in jobs supported by recreation on public lands".

Metcalf and Chouinard's criticism reflect growing concerns by their industry and outdoor enthusiasts, such as hunters, over what they see as public land grabs by state politicians who want to open up more of that land to oil and gas development. Such a move would limit or eliminate public access for recreation, disrupt wildlife and pose threats to air and water quality.

In 2014, a lengthy study found that if Utah took control of 31.2m acres of federal land in the state, for oil and gas development, it could generate around \$50m in profit each year – but only if oil and gas prices were to remain at the 2014 rates. In Utah and other states, including Wyoming, in which some lawmakers are pushing for transfers, opponents worry that if the states find that they can't afford to maintain those lands, they'll be forced to sell them to private buyers.

Last week, Republicans in the House in Congress voted to eliminate a rule that requires the government to calculate the value of federal land, including the value created through recreation, before transferring or selling it to states or others. That change, if enacted, could remove a major barrier for speeding up land transfers.

Utah is a fitting place for a battle over public land. The state is home to Arches, Canyonlands and Zion national parks, as well as some 22m acres overseen by the federal Bureau of Land Management. The state is filled with red rock canyons and rivers that are the stuff of climbers' and whitewater paddlers' dreams.

Unsurprisingly, tourism and recreation fuel the state economy. Utah's outdoor recreation industry is worth \$12bn, including \$3.6bn in wages and salaries, and supports approximately 122,000 jobs, according to the OIA.

According to the University of Utah's Kem C Gardner Policy Institute, which provides research and analysis to the state government, the leisure and hospitality industry (which encompasses more than just outdoor recreation) accounts for 146,795 jobs, outpacing manufacturing (125,160) and finance and insurance (62,860). The development of natural resources, such as oil, gas and minerals, generates a small slice of the pie at 8,500 jobs.

In a statement, the OIA said it will continue to take feedback from its members on determining the best venue for the trade show going forward. It added: "We must be clear that protection of America's public lands, including those in Utah, are critical and any threat to their protection is a threat to the outdoor industry."

Patagonia's CEO Rose Marcario, who was at the trade show, said the company relies on the event to meet buyers and partners and promote its philanthropic efforts, but she added that "standing up for our principles is always our top priority". She also noted that Patagonia alone can't force change in Utah's capital, and hoped that "other brands in the industry would follow our lead".

A spokesperson for Herbert said on Wednesday she didn't know whether the governor has read either Metcalf's opinion piece or Chouinard's letter. But his deputy chief of staff issued a statement on Tuesday rejecting the claim that the governor is out to destroy the state's public lands. The statement said Herbert's objection to the Bears Ears designation was the "sweeping unilateral" nature of the move by an outgoing administration.

Utah's lieutenant governor Spencer Cox attended the trade show earlier this week and listened to the concerns of industry representatives.

Metcalf, who retired from Black Diamond in 2014, helped to bring the trade show to Salt Lake City more than 20 years ago and make the state an attractive place for outdoor businesses, such as tour guides. Utah now has an Office of Outdoor Recreation to recruit outdoors-focused business to the state.

The trade show is under contract to remain at Salt Lake City's Salt Palace Convention Center through 2018, but negotiations for the event in 2019 and onward will begin soon.

"I love this state and that's why I'm so invested in these issues," Metcalf said via a phone interview from the trade show, adding that the intent of his opinion piece was not to promote

leaving Utah but to urge the governor to change his stance around public land and its best uses.
“If that does not happen, I think the industry [association] will decide not to renew its contract.”

Appendix F – AS5

Wang, Uclia. “Patagonia pulls out of Utah trade show in protest of state’s public land grab.” *The Guardian UK*. Guardian News and Media, 7 Feb. 2017. Web. 8 March 2017.

Subtitle: Company founder has urged Utah governor to stop trying to undo the decision by former president Obama to create the Bears Ears National Monument

Patagonia has just become the first retailer to pull out of a big industry trade show in Utah to protest state leaders’ efforts to strip federal protection of public land.

The company’s announcement Tuesday came after its founder, Yvon Chouinard, wrote an open letter last month urging Utah governor Gary Herbert to stop trying to undo the decision by former president Obama to create the Bears Ears National Monument.

Chouinard published the letter during the Outdoor Retailer trade show, which attracts hundreds of companies to Salt Lake City twice a year, and warned that the company will stop attending the show unless Herbert shows “the outdoor industry that he wants our business – and that he supports thousands of his constituents of all political persuasions who work in jobs supported by recreation on public lands.”

Last Friday, Herbert signed a resolution asking US President Donald Trump to strip Bears Ears of its national monument designation.

Patagonia wasn’t the only prominent retailer to call out Utah for fighting against the interest of the outdoor industry. The founder of climbing and ski equipment retailer Black Diamond, Petre Metcalf, wrote an opinion piece in the Salt Lake Tribune that called on the trade show to leave Utah.

In a statement announcing Patagonia’s departure from the trade show, Patagonia CEO Rose Marcario said the company is “confident other outdoor manufacturers and retailers will join us in moving our investments to a state that values our industry and promotes public lands conservation.” The trade show organizer said it will be reviewing options for the event’s location next year, but has not ruled out Utah.

Herbert’s action reflects a broader movement by Republicans in the state and in Congress to transfer federal land to states and private owners for more oil, gas and mining development. Utah congressman Jason Chaffetz introduced a bill last month to sell off 3.3m acres of federal land before withdrawing it a week later after facing strong criticism from environmentalists and outdoors enthusiasts including hunters and fishermen.

Appendix G – AS6

Chhabra, Esha. “Does Patagonia have the answer for narrowing the gender wage gap?” *The Guardian UK*. Guardian News and Media, 17 Nov. 2016. Web. 20 Nov. 2016.

(Subtitle) More than 50 US companies have signed a pledge to commit to paying the same salaries to women and men; here, we profile four of them.

The debate around fairer pay for women feels more prominent and urgent than ever. Yet, despite this momentum, new estimates suggest the gender pay gap won't be closed anytime soon. A new report from the World Economic Forum estimates that it will take up to 170 years for the world's women to earn wages that are equitable to men's.

While that's the global picture, things aren't much better at home in the US. According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, in 2015, female full-time employees earned about \$0.79 for every dollar made by full-time male employees. For minorities, the data is even more disparaging: African American women earn \$0.64, Native American women earn \$0.59 and Latinas earn \$0.54.

Now, with pressure from legislators, investors and the public sector rising, more states and companies are proactively taking strides to decrease the disparity and address these damning numbers. In August, Massachusetts passed an equal pay law, making it illegal for employees to ask potential hires about their salary histories. California also tightened up its equal pay act this year, calling for companies to look beyond job titles and ensure that men and women who do the same types of work are paid the same wage.

Earlier this year, Obama issued an executive order that will require companies with more than 100 people to report their employee salaries to the government, broken down by gender and race. And in June, the White House announced its Equal Pay Pledge, calling on American companies to commit to paying the same salaries to women and men. More than 50 major companies signed the pledge, including Apple, GM, Target and Unilever.

This is an encouraging first step. But what are businesses doing in practice to address inequalities in pay? Here, we take a look at the pay practices of four big employers to explore what could – and should – be done.

Patagonia

California-based Patagonia, an outdoor clothing retailer known for its activism as much as its windbreakers and fleece jackets, signed the White House pledge in August. But they've long had a tradition of catering to female employees, says Dean Carter, vice president of human resources and shared services. Currently, the company, which has a female CEO, Rose Marcario, has more women than men on staff – 866 v 862, respectively.

Carter attributes the company's ability to retain female employees to its culture and generous benefits: 12 weeks of fully paid family medical leave applicable to both men and women, with

no limitations on the number of times it can be used; 16 weeks fully paid maternity leave; and 12 weeks fully paid paternity leave. Patagonia also offers free on-site childcare to all staff members, both at their Ventura headquarters and their distribution warehouse in Reno.

“It’s true, there are financial costs to offering on-site child care, but the benefits – financial and otherwise – pay for themselves every year,” Marcario says. “As a CEO, it’s not even a question in my mind. Business leaders [and their chief financial officers] should take note.”

The company’s child care program began in 1983. Three decades later, the company says it actually recoups 91% of the program costs through tax benefits, employee retention and employee engagement. Patagonia also says its family-friendly policies have helped improve productivity and have resulted in more women in management positions, and it’s proud of the fact that a full 100% of new mothers return to work after taking maternity leave.

Arjuna Capital

While Patagonia has been proactive about gender parity, some companies have been harder to turn around, according to Natasha Lamb, director of equity research and shareholder engagement at Arjuna Capital.

Arjuna, a Massachusetts-based wealth management company that champions social responsibility, and it invests in some of the biggest tech companies in the US, including eBay, Expedia, GoDaddy, Facebook, Alphabet, Intel, Adobe, Microsoft and Amazon. Last year, Lamb decided to take a bold public stance on the gender wage gap by filing shareholder resolutions at each of these companies, requesting that they publicly share data on the differences in pay between men and women.

The companies’ responses were mixed. For example, Intel, Apple and Microsoft agreed to share their data, revealing that male and female employees are paid the same or nearly the same wages. Google and Adobe haven’t complied, nor has Facebook, though it has said that male and female employees are paid equitably.

This was not Lamb’s first time pushing tech giants to consider equal pay for women. In 2014, she filed a first shareholder resolution to eBay requesting data on gender and pay; only 8% of shareholders voted for it. “I really expected that eBay would be more proactive and receptive and work with us. But that didn’t happen,” Lamb says.

“It was the first year a gender pay gap proposal was ever filed and ever went to a vote. As an emerging investor issue, it did not garner the support of the proxy advisory firms, which recommend how investors should cast their votes. Plus, at that point no other companies had taken any action. The Gap was the only company to claim it had no gender pay gap.”

By 2016, Lamb had filed proposals at nine big tech companies, and many of them were beginning to disclose their pay gaps and commit to closing them. “So by the spring of 2016, [investors] viewed the gender pay gap as a competitive issue critical for attracting and retaining top talent. Peers were taking action on equal pay.”

As a result, in 2016 the vote went up, with 51% of votes cast in favor of disclosing pay disparities at the company. Ebay finally released the gender and pay data in October, revealing that women earn nearly the same salaries as men in equivalent roles – they get 99.8% of what men earn, to be exact. While Lamb says few companies report complete compensation, which would include salary, bonuses, and stock grants, Ebay said that its data includes those additions.

Salesforce

The tech giant, which signed the White House pledge, underwent a massive audit in 2015, looking at salaries for its 17,000 employees and whether there were differences based on gender and job function. Salesforce found that 6% of its workers needed a salary adjustment, and spent nearly \$3m to “eliminate statistically significant differences in pay”, which affected both men and women.

Going beyond just wage equity, Salesforce has added schools with more diverse student populations to its roster of places to recruit new employees. The company has also launched a new leadership training program for employees that it says has boosted the number of women who were promoted by 33% in the last year. As far as benefits, Salesforce has increased employee parental leave for both women and men to 12 weeks off at 80% salary, and allows them to return gradually by working reduced hours for the first four weeks at full pay.

Expedia

Washington-based travel site Expedia says it strives to address diversity in the workplace beyond just looking at wage parity. The company says that it pays men and women equally for equivalent roles, including bonuses and stock-based compensation. And, 51% of Expedia’s employees in the US are women.


However, the harder task is getting women into management roles. Currently, only 33% of Expedia’s manager level and senior or executive leadership positions are held by women.

“While we compare well with many of our technology peers, we have a long way to go in bringing more female representation into leadership roles,” says Dara Khosrowshahi, president and CEO of Expedia. “We need to attract, hire, engage and promote talent of all kinds all around the world, and we believe that by enriching the diversity of workforce across all dimensions, including gender, we achieve the most enriched outcomes.”

As far as benefits, Expedia offers 12 weeks of paid parental leave for both women and men. However, Nikki Krishnamurthy, executive vice president, says that it’s hard for the company to determine what causes women to leave the company after having children. Expedia has studied retention rates across gender, finding similar rates among male and female employees. Most women, Krishnamurthy says, return after the leave, adding: “But that isn’t to say that after a year or two that they don’t make an alternative career choice.”

Appendix H – Screenshot of CT1


Comments on “Nestlé admits slavery in Thailand while fighting child labour lawsuit in Ivory Coast.” Guardian News and Media, 2016. Author’s screenshot.



Jonathan Stromberg
1 Feb 2016 3:24
30 ↑

If you haven't heard of the Nestle boycott, look it up now! Lobbying in poor countries to enable itself to aggressively promote milk powder has led to a significant cut in breastfeeding rates in some of these countries, where it can be a matter of life and death for babies. Profit before lives.


Share
Report



sabelmouse → **Jonathan Stromberg**
1 Feb 2016 6:15
1 ↑

^^^^^^


Share
Report



Lynx2013 → **Jonathan Stromberg**
1 Feb 2016 9:18
1 ↑

We all have heard of the Nestle boycott. All of us except for the Guardian.


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Report



menaidave → **Lynx2013**
1 Feb 2016 9:51
2 ↑

Or the Guardian is giving it more ammo.

Share
Report



sabelmouse → **menaidave**
2 Feb 2016 5:22
0 ↑

with this? they're all but praising them. this site has become a corporate mouthpiece with the odd bit of slight criticism as alibi.

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